

Ninian Smart on World Religions

Volume 2: Traditions and the Challenges of Modernity

Edited by
Jhon J. Shepherd
University of Cumbria, UK



NINIAN SMART ON WORLD RELIGIONS (VOLUMES 1–2)

John Shepherd has achieved a mammoth task in gathering this extraordinarily rich and diverse collection of Ninian Smart's papers. Carefully selected, skilfully arranged and, most valuable, complemented by a substantial introduction and a complete bibliography of his writings, this work bears witness to Smart's wide-ranging studies on world religions, philosophies and cultures, always set within a larger global vision. A real landmark, this publication reveals like no other Smart's numerous achievements and proves his lasting importance for the contemporary study of religions. It also provides the foundations for a critical reassessment by the next generation of scholars. Exceeding mere academic interest, it has much to offer to all students, teachers and readers interested in world religions or in Ninian Smart as scholar and human being. Surprises will await them on both accounts.

Ursula King, Professor Emerita, University of Bristol, UK

Ninian Smart was a seminal figure in the emerging discipline of Religious Studies and this book of wide-ranging, incisive and often witty essays helps us to understand why. Ranging from ancient Buddhism to contemporary Californian culture, and from ethics to worldview analysis, these essays show how Smart's agile and inventive mind helped to create a new academic discipline. This useful book deserves to be on the shelf of every serious scholar of Religious Studies as a reference, inspiration, and testimony to one of the intellectual giants of the twentieth century.

Mark Juergensmeyer, Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara, author of *Terror in the Mind of God* and *Global Rebellion* and President, American Academy of Religion.

Ninian Smart was arguably one of the most gifted and tough-minded thinkers in the field of religious studies of the past generation. This collection of writings – many difficult to find – will make available a wide range of remarkable work, displaying in full the best qualities of Smart's thinking. As such, it will be a valuable resource for future work in the study of religion.

Ivan Strenski, Professor, UC Riverside, USA

It is very clear that Shepherd has done a masterful job in collecting the only complete bibliography of Smart's enormous contributions to the study of religion in the last half of the twentieth century. This is a work which will be definitive and authoritative and will contribute much at three levels. First, Smart was the heir of a long tradition of scholarship on religion. How he assimilated that tradition and at the same time made major advances in how we might study religion is fully documented in this collection. So much of Smart's way of doing the study of religion has become so commonplace that we often overlook how we achieved the present state of the discipline. Shepherd's collection of Smart's work should lead a new generation of scholars to consider the powers of comparison and to execute an intellectual agenda with the same boldness of spirit which is present in the corpus of Smart's work. As a marker of where we have been and where we might go, this collection will be indispensable. Third, Smart's contribution to the pedagogy of the study of religion is equally remarkable and is fully present for the first time in this collection. This collection by Shepherd will thus help to train new generations of teachers who will make their contributions not only in their published research, but also in how they enact and carry forward the study of religion in their classrooms and lecture halls. This will be a very important contribution to scholarship and I urge you to think boldly about how it might be realized in its entirety.

Richard Hecht, Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

Ninian Smart will surely remain best known for his philosophically informed analyses of religion as a cultural phenomenon, but his numerous occasional writings provided entertainment and stimulation, for some disturbing and for others liberating. He was unstoppably creative.

Michael Pye, Professor, University of Marburg, Germany. President of the International Association for the History of Religions 1995–2000

John Shepherd, a student of Ninian Smart's at Lancaster University and the organizer of the Ninian Smart Archive at Lancaster, knows the Smart corpus better than anyone else. For Ninian Smart on World Religions he has chosen writings that evince the extraordinary range of Smart's work on religion. Smart wrote about religion generally and about specific religions, both Western and Eastern. He contributed to the philosophy of religion, to the sociology of religion, to the comparison of religions, to mysticism, to religious ethics, and to religious dialogue. He linked up traditional religions with new ones and with secular ones. His approach, like his character, was inclusivist and irenic rather than exclusivist and dogmatic. He knew multiple religions firsthand, not just in the abstract. Living religions, not just texts, grabbed him. He was as much an ethnographer as a theorist, and even his theorizing focused more on the identification of elements, or 'dimensions', of religion than on the explanation of them. No contemporary scholar was a finer ambassador for Religious Studies than Ninian, as the writings chosen by Shepherd evince. With its comprehensive overview of Smart's multifarious writings on religion, this excellent volume, better than any other, shows what made Ninian Ninian.

Robert A. Segal, Professor, University of Aberdeen, UK

Ninian Smart was the Dean of Religious Studies in the Anglophone world and a major influence on the discipline in the last half of the twentieth century, author of many books and founder of one of the excellent, independent journals of Religious Studies, Religion.

It is high time there was a collection of Smart's essays that reflects the development of his thought on world religions – something which deserves to be an object of study, in its own right. This is that collection. Here, under one cover is a snapshot of Smart's intellectual legacy. John Shepherd is to be commended for his assembly of a rich and representative set of essays, spanning Ninian Smart's long career. This collection, edited by Shepherd, is a must-have for anyone interested in the study of world religions or the history of the study of religion. Certainly, no library should be without it.

Thomas Ryba, Adjunct Professor, Purdue University,
North American editor of Religion

Ninian Smart, the past master of Religious Studies, whose influence today is as a source for critical reflection and the sounding out of new directions in research and pedagogy. The carefully selected and themed essays of the volume range from the well-known to those which are hard to track down. John Shepherd, who has previously established the Ninian Smart Archive in the Library of Lancaster University, provides an outstanding critical analysis, teasing out the tensions in Smart's thought which are very much alive today. A marvellous volume to mark the forty years anniversary of Ninian's founding of Religious Studies in Britain.

Paul Heelas, Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Lancaster University, UK

Few of us interested in the study of religion during the second half of the twentieth century could fail to have been influenced directly or indirectly by Ninian Smart; and even fewer of us could fail to be stimulated and learn much from this invaluable collection of his papers. A truly Renaissance man, Smart belonged to and fostered a tradition in which learning spanned both space and time. The breadth of his comparative knowledge has rarely been equalled, but there was also a sensitivity and depth to his understanding of religions. Those who are acquainted with Smart's work will need no encouragement to turn to this volume. Those who are acquainted are strongly recommended to do so to gain both erudition and sheer pleasure.

Eileen Barker, Professor Emeritus, London School of Economics, UK

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Ninian Smart

Ninian Smart (1927–2001)

One of the best known, and, certainly in the UK, one of the most influential scholars of religion of the latter half of the twentieth century, Ninian Smart shot to national prominence as founding professor of the new Department of Religious Studies in the University of Lancaster, opened in 1967. The first department of its kind in the country, it aroused considerable controversy with the announcement that the holder of the chair might be 'of any faith or none'.

Smart was in fact a committed Christian, moving to Lancaster from the position of H.G. Wood Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham, but was already known in academic circles, through his research work and various publications, as a lucid and thought-provoking practitioner of comparative religion. From his new base in Lancaster he now worked at giving fresh shape to this field methodologically, and also at cementing its place at all levels in the education system. Publishing widely, both at an advanced academic and also at a more popular level, he achieved an international reputation as a skilled analyst and exponent of religions (and related worldviews).

From 1976 to 1982 Smart divided his time between Lancaster and the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where from 1986 to his retirement in 1998 he was the J.F. Rowny Professor in the Comparative Study of Religion. From 1998 to 2000 he was President of the American Academy of Religion. Widely travelled, Smart was a popular guest lecturer in many parts of the world, combining a sharp intellect and a keen sense of humour. He was honoured with a number of awards.

Smart advocated a distinctive multidisciplinary method in the study of religion, although in some earlier publications he perhaps overemphasized a so-called phenomenological approach, leading some commentators (and critics) to place him in an unduly confined pigeon-hole. His overall aim was to minimize confessional bias and maximise open-mindedness – the study of religion being too important to be anything other than appropriate for people 'of any faith or none'.

In the UK this stance became central to debates about the changing shape of religious education in schools. Smart was a key figure in the move that gathered momentum from the late sixties onwards from a Christian confessional to a multi-religious non-confessional approach, and he helped set up the influential Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education. Many would regard his impact on education as central to his legacy.

Smart returned to Lancaster in order to spend his last years, still full of fresh ideas and projects. Sadly, the years were to be only weeks. He is buried in Lancaster.

(For a fuller account, see the entry on Smart in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edition, 2005, vol. 12, New York: Macmillan Reference Books.)



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Preface

Ninian Smart published nearly three hundred papers in scholarly books and journals, and the task of selecting from them is a daunting one. My approach has been to attempt an analytical framework within which the choice can be made, and which facilitates an overall understanding of Smart's wide-ranging and varied output. A mix of earlier and later papers has been included, giving at least some sense of developments in his interests and thought, and some less severely academic items have also been included, so that there is a mix here for the kind of wide audience that he himself was adept at addressing. The aim has been to provide representative coverage of main themes and topics in Smart's work, while also attempting a balance between papers that are little-known because they are difficult to access, and some that have already appeared more than once, but are too important to omit. The latter, though, have been kept to a minimum, especially where they have already reappeared in the two edited collections *Concept and Empathy*, ed. Don Wiebe (1986), and *Reflections in the Mirror of Religion*, ed. John P. Burris (1997) – hence there are a number of cross-references to these two publications in the Introduction 'A Critical Analysis' in Volume 1. (The Introduction is also available on the Ashgate website.)

In the Introduction I have sought to convey a sense of the shape of the work overall, and thus to contextualize the papers that follow. Additional papers are referred to from time to time, as are some of the forty plus books that Smart authored or co-edited, by way of reinforcing the overall analysis. (Papers included in the present volumes are indicated by their chapter and page numbers herein.)

The allocation of papers to the different categories is no doubt sometimes rather artificial, but it is preferable to providing an undifferentiated list. With this in mind, I have, in an appendix, added a bibliography of further publications relevant to each section (reference to some of them in the introductory analysis will, perhaps, whet appetites). Here too the allocation to the various categories can only be indicative. The lists are intended for judicious use, not unreflecting acceptance; but as such, I hope that they may be found helpful.

Full bibliographical details of all Smart's papers appear in the Ninian Smart Bibliography which appears as Appendix 2, and is also available on the Ashgate website. It was first published in the journal *Religion*, which Smart was instrumental in launching, and it appears with permission. The Bibliography is divided into sections (A, books by Smart, and also the two edited collections of Smart's papers mentioned above; B, papers in other edited collections; C, papers in academic journals, and pamphlets), with publications in order of date of publication within each section. The combination of date and letter – for example, 1998, B – after the title of a paper referred to permits location of the full publishing details accordingly. (However, in the case of books by Smart where the actual title is quoted, addition of the letter A is otiose, and therefore omitted.)

Dividing the papers into two relatively independent volumes is also a somewhat artificial task: despite the extraordinary range of Smart's work, the numerous themes do

in fact knit together into an integrated whole. Yet a rough logic can be claimed for division in terms of the sub-titles to each volume.

In Volume 1, *Religious Experience and Philosophical Analysis*, the emphasis is on delineating the foundations of Smart's oeuvre. What emerges, at the most fundamental level, is what might almost be dubbed a 'fundamentalist' appeal to religious experience (and distinctive patterns thereof) as authenticating the phenomenon of religion in general, and as essential to any properly rounded conception of human fulfilment and wisdom.

The distinctive patterns consist of varied interweavings of two strands of religious experience in particular, identified as the numinous and the mystical respectively. Empathetic understanding of these permits the disclosure of an internal logic of religious discourse, philosophical analysis of which conduces to a deeper and more sensitive understanding of religion in its essence and manifestations (Smart much admired G. van der Leeuw's *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 1938, and provided a Foreword when it was reissued in 1986).

Integral to this joint appeal to religious experience and philosophical analysis, as conceived by Smart, was the importance of comparative studies in religion. Yet these in turn generated an increasingly complex mix of elements whose nature and interconnections called for careful mapping. This Smart proceeded to undertake with enthusiasm, providing an ambitious model of religious studies in universities and colleges, and launching a revolution in religious education in schools in Britain and elsewhere. Both the concern with comparative studies, and Smart's distinctive contribution to theory, are reflected in the papers that follow.

In Volume 2, *Traditions and the Challenges of Modernity*, the focus shifts on the one hand to Smart's study of individual religious traditions, and on the other to questions surrounding the fate (and the future) of these traditions in the world today.

In several of his books, such as the frequently revised *The Religious Experience* (1st edition 1969, 5th edition 1996), or *The World's Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations* (1st edition 1989, 2nd edition 1998), Smart dealt with the full range of religions, and this outstanding breadth of knowledge is apparent too in a number of his papers. Yet his fondness for Buddhism in particular, along with (aspects of) Hinduism, is also apparent from the disproportionate number of occasions on which he returned to these topics.

Analysis of specific religious traditions, though, began to give way to, or to be complemented by, exploration of similarities with quasi-religions, especially nationalism and Marxism. This task he dubbed 'worldview analysis' – commenting, a little ruefully, what a pity it was that 'Weltanschauung' happened not to be an English term (a judgement with which one may feel free to disagree). This fresh focus led to numerous publications, including *Worldviews* (1983) and his Gifford Lectures, *Beyond Ideology* (1981, 1982). A selection of his papers on this theme is included alongside ones dealing with religions as traditionally understood.

Comparative studies, though, remained a topic to which he attached great significance (and to which he brought great skill). The final groups of papers explore different aspects of the relationship of religions to each other in the modern world (including inter-

faith dialogue), and also of their relationship to the liberal pluralism by which they are increasingly surrounded (and challenged). Several of the most thought-provoking of these papers appeared relatively late in Smart's career, and can be seen as teasing out lessons from his accumulated experience and learning.

Finally, scrutiny of the Bibliography will reveal that the papers included or referred to in the present two volumes do not quite exhaust Smart's academic output. However, apart from book reviews and contributions to the press, the main papers omitted either deal with topics other than those relevant to the present publication, or consist of contributions to reference handbooks such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias.



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2 'Theravāda and Processes: Nirvana as a Meta-Process', Frank J. Hoffman and Deegalle Mahinda, eds, *Pali Buddhism* (Richmond, Curzon, 1996), pp. 196–205. Copyright © 1996 Frank J. Hoffman and Deegalle Mahinda. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Books UK.

3 'The Dramatic Effect of the Buddha on Western Theories of Religion', Thomas Ryba, George D. Bond and Herman Tull, eds, *The Comity and Grace of Method: Essays in Honor of Edmund F. Perry* (Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 2004), pp. 321–329. Copyright © 2004 Northwestern University Press. All right reserved.

15 'Distinctively Californian Spiritual Movements' (c. 1985) was found amongst Smart's papers. It does appear to have been published (in a journal, judging by the format), but very extensive searches and enquiries have failed to identify where. It is therefore not listed in Appendix 2.

16 'Religion and Polity: Reflections on the History of Religions and the Analysis of Politics – A Question of Definition', Sara J. Denning-Bolle and Edwin Gerow, eds, *The Persistence of Religions: Essays in Honor of Keew W. Bolle* (Malibu, CA, Undena Publications, 1996), pp. 361–370.

19 'The Importance of Diasporas', S. Shaked, D. Shulman, and G. G. Stousma, eds, *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 288–297. Re-keyed with permission.

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27 'Pluralism', in Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds, *A New Handbook of Christian Theology* (Cambridge, UK, The Lutterworth Press; Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 1992), pp. 360–364. Used by permission.

32 'An Ultimate Vision', Martin Forward, ed., *Ultimate Visions: Reflections on the Religions We Choose* (Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 1995), pp. 257–265.

Appendix 2 John J. Shepherd, 'The Ninian Smart Archive and Bibliography', *Religion* 35 (2005): 167–197. Copyright © 2005. Reprinted with permission from Elsevier.

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I

INDIVIDUAL TRADITIONS

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(ii) Hinduism

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(iii) Chinese Religions/Worldviews

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CHAPTER 1

Mysticism and Scripture in Theravāda Buddhism

Buddhism—above all, the Theravāda—can be considered the most mystical of religions. If mysticism involves inner meditation, then the way of life preached by the Buddha Gotama's teaching was centrally focused on the mystical path. It centers on *jhāna* (*dhyāna*, in Sanskrit). Of course, ethical behavior and sundry reminders and rites form part of the ambience of the Buddhist life. And, of course, the philosophical side is vital, since the liberated person needs insight into the nature and structure of the world.

There are gods around, for the Buddha did not want to deny people's beliefs, but they are unimportant in the matter of spiritual liberation. There are brahmins, but Gotama's approach was moralizing, meaning that the true brahmin is the person of restraint and virtuous conduct (D.I.115).

The Statues of the Early Canon

In Theravāda Buddhism there can be no *unio mystica*, for the simple reason that there is nothing to be united *with*—no God or Ground of Being. A commonplace of much literature of the West has therefore no application in this tradition. In Western religions, God reveals; hence there must be a connection between mysticism and scripture. But in the Theravāda there is no revelation or *śruti*. That was a brahmin conception. Neither Brahma nor the Vedic revelation were taken seriously by Gotama. The former represented himself as the creator of the universe (D.I.18) when he wasn't, he himself being a victim of illusion. The brahmin might master the Vedas, but the true master of the mantas (mantras) is the Buddha (Sn 997). In the Theravāda, rituals are a means of self-improvement, and sacrifice (condemned especially in the Jatakas as cruel, for

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example, J.3.518ff.) is reinterpreted as gift-giving or alms (Sn 295). Even offerings to the Buddha are a matter of *puñña*, and the rite is reflected back on the individual. Since, strictly speaking, the Buddha neither exists nor does not exist, there can be neither this-worldly nor cross-worldly interplay with him. The person who offers a flower to him is like the tennis player who practices against the wall: his good play tests himself, not some other person.

All this affects attitudes to scriptures. The Pali canon has typical contrasts to later Hindu concepts of revelatory truth. First in the matter of language, the brahmins held that the Sanskrit tongue was both natural and everlasting: it was the ur-language of the cosmos. It was natural in the sense that it has a built-in affinity to what it describes (though the Mīmāṃsā interpretation saw the Vedas as a set of injunctions, not of descriptions). By contrast, the Pali tradition considered language a creation of the human mind, which was based on convention (Miln 160; Sn 648). Second, the brahmin ideology treated *śabda* or verbal testimony as one of the *pramāṇas* or (sources of knowledge), together with perception and inference. Verbal testimony covered scripture (testimony to matters transcendental). Strictly speaking, the term *scripture* is misleading: the Veda was of course transmitted orally—it was oratory. Instead, the Buddha, while taking steps to ensure that his teaching was transmitted with a reasonable amount of accuracy, considered that ultimately the truth has to be personally experienced: the truth in Buddhism is *ephipassiko* (D II.217, A 1.158). In later terms, we would say that the Buddha confined his sources of knowledge to perception and inference. Naturally, perception is here a stretched knowledge, including paranormal experience and yogic perception. Third, the Buddha distrusted the natural fit of language to reality. It misleadingly suggested the substantiality of things and of the ego, for instance. Human language can express and contribute to human ignorance.

If we stick to the attitudes of the Pali canon and, for that matter, of early Mahāyāna, we would see knowledge in terms mainly of experience, both everyday and contemplative. Importantly, too, the contemplative life was itself a chief source of cosmology, and not just of inner psychology. The spiritual adept—and, obviously, the historical Buddha—was the great hero and the *arhants*, or saints, were the secondary heroes, since they followed the pattern of his behavior. A saint could remember his or her previous births, could have knowledge of paranormal phenomena, and could voyage to the ends of the cosmos (D.III 131, D.I.85 ff.). Liberated persons and, in particular, the Buddha, have the *dibbacakkhu* (divine eye) enabling them to perceive paranormally (D.II.20). So it was that the Buddha could see the gods (though brahmins talked about them, but not from experience—another ironical critique of their ideology). And the Buddha, for that matter, could see *through* them.

Some scholars will view my account so far as being oversimplified and untrue to the facts as they exist now in Theravādin countries. What I have presented here is part of the philosophy of the fairly early Theravāda, as found in the Pali canon; however, one may add the following observations. First, the Sangha had its own point of view but lived in a symbiosis with various religious movements, customs, and beliefs. Though it considered that the “true brahmin” was a genuinely moral being, it nevertheless had to live with real brahmins, engaged in mantric practices, for example, formulaic magic. It was sometimes important in civil society to harness their ritual expertise; hence, in Southeast Asian Kingdoms, monarchs were installed in brahmin-infused ceremonials.

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Moreover, the Sangha lived in a state of amity with various agricultural and other rituals. Basically, the teachings of Buddhism are those designed for the Sangha, including lay disciples. There is an indefinite penumbra of relatively faithful people around the Sangha and, beyond them, the rest of society at large. This has tended to make Buddhism easily symbiotic, though, notably, some forces have been dedicated to breaking up the Sangha (such as Islam, from the eleventh century C.E., in parts of India). Generally, the Sangha has survived in unison with surrounding religions; but it is wrong to identify Buddhism with those peripheral religious forces. There is a tendency in anthropology to do this.

But there is, beyond this, a philosophical point to be made. Throughout most of Indian philosophy the vital distinction between entities focuses on the question whether or not they are timeless. However important the gods might be, they are inferior because they are temporal. But nirvana is timeless (M.I 326; Sn 69, 220), and everything else is impermanent. Living with brahmins is a concession (but not ultimately a serious one) to timed reality. Certainly it does not involve accepting any thought of substance in their ignorant mantric activities (S.IV.28).

The Theravāda we have today has of course been affected by the Mahāyāna, which, in turn, was increasingly affected by brahmin practices and ideas, as witnessed by the fact that the new Buddhist scriptures were written in Sanskrit (admittedly somewhat hybrid). In evolving mantric chantings of selected texts in the rites known as *pirit*, the Theravāda mimicked brahmin and other kinds of magic (Vin.II 110; JI 200; Vism 414). The use of Buddha images and the ritual painting in of the eyes reflect Hindu practices, even if the spirit of Buddha images is most serene and not numinous as in the Hindu style. The Hindu tradition has had its influence within temple complexes, in the *devalayes*, with Viṣṇu and other gods being present and ready for offerings (admittedly for mundane rather than spiritual ends). And the South Indian war god Kataragama plays a notable part in the pilgrimage life of the island, and so, primarily, of Buddhists. Nevertheless, the Theravāda is almost everywhere opposed to the notion that sacramental rituals help to liberate persons—for instance, there is a strong attack on brahmin ablutionary rituals (Th 238). The gods do not get you beyond this world; these numinous beings are only important for material concerns. Strictly speaking, monks should not deal with them. The eightfold path lies in a different direction. And its culmination lies principally in its last three members—namely, right effort, right awareness, and right contemplation—which help transform trust (*saddha*) into insight (*paññā*). The path is traditionally divided into morality, contemplation, and insight (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, I.12); and the Buddhist life, into morality, giving, and contemplation. In brief, mystical training, practice, and experience are crucial to liberation. The rest is secondary.

Of course, we have to take into account here the framework of karma theory. Since the spiritual life is suffused with moral training and action, and since morality creates merit and merit creates advancement, then following the Buddha is prudent in the long run. An important role in creating moral attitudes is Buddhist ritual. This, as we have seen, is one reason Buddhism rejects brahmin ritual. Eventually its attitude to noninjury and the rejection of animal sacrifices came to dominate the brahmin ethos, even if animal sacrifices have not even today vanished from the Indian scene. But apart from animal sacrifices, Theravāda Buddhism was more or less rigorously opposed to

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sacramental rites (ND2, 493). So when the Sangha or pious laypersons use ritual, it is nearly always given an ethical efficacy and significance.

A critic might note that though I began by saying that the Theravāda is pure mysticism, the religion of the numinous is not without its manifestations in the tradition. More particularly, the huge Buddha images might encourage the thought that the faithful really worship the Buddha, even though he is not “there” to be worshiped. We have already noted that there can be no transaction between the Tathāgata and his followers. He is no creator, either, of course. The Theravāda is generally free from presumptions drawn from the Mahāyāna or the Tantra. The imagery of sexual union, for instance, as a symbol of contemplative communion makes no sense in philosophy which has neither substances nor an other.

Let me discuss the principles that animate the Theravāda doctrine in a little more detail, since they bear on the relation between contemplation and liberation. First, nothing is permanent (S 5.197). Nothing has substance. Language misleads us into thinking that items in the world have continuity; and language is in this and other ways systematically misleading. In describing the gross and unanalyzed world, language suggests that there are things and selves, which, upon reflection, break down into simpler constituents, all of which, in one form or another, are events. Second, Buddhist philosophy sees the whole cosmos as conditioned. That is, every phase of existence is the effect of chain of events, multiply conditioned (S.II.7). This vision of the world, discerned by *aniccavipassanā*, is not merely abstract; it also contains particularities that bear on the makeup of human individuals. In this, Buddhism differs markedly from Western psychology, and also from Indian analyses, such as that of Sankhya, despite the latter’s affinities with Jainism and Buddhism; probably it was a sramanic system captured by the brahmin tradition. In any event, Buddhism’s theory of the five *khandhas*, “groups of events” (or heaps, *rasi*) (S.111, 101, 47, 86) is characteristic of its analytic vision. It shows the Theravāda’s preoccupation with psychology as a science—which forms the background to meditation but also is the basis for framing a cosmology, since each meditative state has a corresponding plane of outer existence.

The vision also places consciousness, or rather the events of consciousness, in a strategic location. Contemplation is aimed at the purification of consciousness. Not for nothing is Buddhaghosa’s great classic entitled *The Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*). It is not an inspirational book, but one that is highly technical and logically laid out. It belongs with the apparent aridities of the *Abhidhamma*, rather than with the colorful *Suttas*, or with the songs of the monks and nuns, the *Jatakas*, and so forth.

As we have already noted, Buddhism in the Theravāda is empiricist, but in a stretched way that differentiates it from most Western empiricism of modern times. This is so, first, because it incorporates paranormal experiences, together with contemplative states—for instance, the most subtle treatment of the stages of *jhāna*—which are not counted typically as informative or important in most Western empiricisms. Second, Buddhism has a place for a state “beyond” the cosmos, namely, nirvana. To be accurate, it is both within and outside the cosmos. A saint experiences or realizes nirvana and enters into a dispositional state of liberation in which his liberation is a continuous and active awareness, while he lives. This is the so-called *saupādisesa* state—that is, nirvana “with a substrate” (It 38; Nett 92). When he is deceased, he is “in” *anupādisesa*

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nirvana. This implies, of course, among other things, that the saint is no longer reborn. This is an unutterable, indescribable transcendental state.

Incidentally, the Buddha greatly simplified the idea of liberation by freeing it from identification with the location of a soul. Instead of a permanent self, he substituted nirvana or liberation. In effect, the soul became the potentiality for liberation. Later in Mahāyāna Buddhism, this became the Buddhanature. So the Buddha reduced the idea of liberation to its bare essentials: an indescribable and unanalyzable transcendental state, consequent upon treading the path; the summit of the contemplative life consists in the realization or experience of nirvana.

It is true that many occasions are cited where the Buddha's presence and words have a role in bringing on liberation; nevertheless, because there is no divine Being, there seems to be no call for testimony of a scared, liturgical kind. His religion was open (he claimed not to have the *acariyamutthi*, "closed fist of the teacher" [D.II.100; S.V. 153]). The point, of course, is that an insecure teacher holds something back to avoid becoming superfluous. The Buddha was not like that: if you follow his path, you will end up seeing the truth—having a mystical and articulated vision of nirvana and of its counterposing cosmos. And the Theravāda tradition is not esoteric in inclination; there are no secret truths that need ordained gurus and numinously guaranteed interpretation. Who knows what the Buddha would have thought of the mantras of Tantra and secret instructions? He doubtless would have reckoned it as part of the decline of the faith a thousand years after his decease.

Naturally, because in our age the Buddha is the one teacher (having made his own way to nirvana without immediate assistance from any other person, while later saints made their way thither because of the teaching and inspiration of the Buddha), the words of Gotama and his early disciples had to be preserved. This is why the most important of the three divisions of the *Tipiṭaka* is the *Sutta*, or discourse basket. There is, of course, even here a fluid connection between the words of the Buddha and of his disciples. A vital pair of collections includes the songs of the monks and of the nuns (the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā*), which are intended to be autobiographical verses (for the most part) describing how the said elders achieved their liberation. Although they are often somewhat formally put together and a bit repetitive, they do incorporate personal experience. They incorporate the scenes of nature, some charming, as part of the setting for the attainment of the peace and the insight of nirvana and of the heroic saintly feats of their putative authors.

The authority of the Buddha and of the saints extends beyond their practical interior expertise in the process of attaining the higher states of consciousness, since liberation involves social and moral qualities. As part of this there are vital things to say about rules, and, of course, this is the justification for the basket known as the *Vinaya* (Vin I.356, II.96; D.I.229). This supplies the framework for the community. An interesting point about Buddhism—that may indeed tell us something about its generally symbiotic character—is that as a faith it centers on its inner band of monks, nuns, and pious lay disciples. It does not strictly identify with the community at large. When you take refuge in the Sangha, it is not like (in some countries) taking refuge in the church, which comprises the whole community. Within the wider society, Buddhism lives with other religions. It does not necessarily merge with society in the larger sense. It might use brahmins for coronations and the like, but it need not pay attention to

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their theology and values. Of course, it has undergone changes as it moves into differing societies. Ultimately in Pure Land Buddhism, the tradition took over Hindu-type devotionalism—bhakti. Such numinous motifs could be depicted on its wider canvas, and they could become a vital asset in China, Korea, and Japan. But in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, the religion of the environment (other than Buddhism) was agricultural, and its adherents lived amicably alongside the Sangha and the Buddhist laity. The main thrust of Buddhism—the contemplative or mystical life—could continue as the dominant partner (insofar as it was practiced by the Sangha).

If the Buddha's message was affected in Sri Lanka, it was more by nationalism as a worldview, even long before modern nationalism came into existence. The Sinhalese were proud of their history, in part because their island status defined them well, and in part because surrounding populations spoke Dravidian languages, while theirs was North Indian in provenance. Further, their neighbors were, for much of their history, Hindu in practice. The preservation of the *dhamma* came to be thought of as both a duty and destiny. Of course, the Buddha had set this in train with his mythic visits to the island, leaving a footprint on Adam's Peak. Though the *vamsa* (chronicles) were not part of the Buddhist canon, they were vital in shaping the consciousness of the Sinhalese, especially in modern times.

The Buddha, then, is the central authority because he blazed the trail to nirvana and experienced the truth in his enlightenment. The latter was indeed the personal experience from which (in this age) the whole religion flows. The Buddha is the exemplar of the true mystic and liberated human being. In some respects he has a superhuman status. It is said in the canon that he is *devātideva*, “god above gods” (Sn 1134; J.IV. 158; VvA 18), and even that he is *brahmaatibrahma*, “Brahma above Brahma.” This does not make him God, as Westerners might be tempted to think. He is above the gods because they are ignorant and because he has attained nirvana, which they can never do as long as they remain gods (only humans can attain the highest state). Like nearly everyone else in the universe, the gods are confused, blundering about the cosmos exuding a slight degree of raw power. Enlightenment involves a certain style—the Buddha worked at it over the years, and when it came to him it was highly cerebral, as well as greatly calm. He was not an inspired and turbulent prophet like Isaiah, speaking when possessed by a powerful Other. The Buddha could not have used the formula “Thus spake the Lord.” Still, he is centrally authoritative because in our age he discovered the path to nirvana, including the philosophy that underlies the growth in understanding and insight, which is essential if we are to attain our goal. This, then, to repeat the main point, is why it is important to preserve the canon. But it is not as if Buddhists rely on a sacred scripture; rather, the Pali canon is a decent record of the words of our supreme teacher and mystical exemplar. Ultimately, when we achieve insight, the words can be thrown away. It is like the case of Einstein: he forged the path to general relativity, but now that he has gone, we can learn about it through physics textbooks. To do physics we do not need to know the biography of Einstein or his exact testimony.

The next refuge is the Dhamma, “teaching.” Here there is a typical ambiguity. Is the Dhamma the teaching or is it what the teaching is about? In the Indian tradition the conflation of meaning and reference is frequent, since the same word *artha* (Pali; Sanskrit = *attha*) is used. Hence the expression *attho ca dhammo ca* (A 169; A.V. 222).

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The *dhamma* is the deeper meaning and reference of the text. From one point of view, the Dhamma is the structure of reality as indicated by the teaching of the Buddha, including the unutterable nature of nirvana; from another point of view, it is the teaching itself. Because of the Buddhist theory that language is conventional, there is a certain distance between words and reality. Moreover, there are indications, even in the Theravāda texts, of that *upāyakosalla* (D III. 220), “skill in means,” which the Buddha exercised in his teaching methods. He adapted his teaching to the mental and cultural condition of his hearers. Consequently, the words of the canon are often indirect and not to be taken too literally. So we have to take the Dhamma to be the *point* of his teaching, not necessarily the exact words. It is as if the Dhamma is the median between the words and the reality.

Another factor to consider is the existential nature of truth, in this context. To understand the Buddha’s teaching, you need to experience what it is about. This is the message in quite a number of the songs of the elders and is attested elsewhere by the following usages: *saccānubodha* (awakening to the truth), *saccābhiseameya* (comprehension of the truth), and *saccānupatti* (realization of the truth) M II 171ff.; Sn 758; M II 173ff.). A monk, for instance, goes to a village and sees a woman dancing in the main street (he is not, by the way, supposed to watch such entertainments) and at once sees the misery of her condition. It is this burst of recognition that brings his understanding of the truth of *dukkha*, “suffering” (“ill-fatedness” might be a better translation, though “suffering” has become the norm in English). So the Dhamma is much more than words—evident from the very fact that its goal is nirvana, and that that ultimately has to be realized in experience.

All this means that, given the contemplative heart of the Theravāda, the scriptures are not revelatory in themselves. This is part of the reason Sri Lankans have a relatively relaxed view of the whole business of scholarly probing of the canon. The canon is an indicator of the truth and a testament to the mystical hero Gotama; but it is essentially a means to an end. The scriptures are surely not, like the Veda (according to Mīmāṃsā), everlasting; nor do they tell you of the mind of God.

With regard to the third refuge, the Sangha, how should we estimate it relative to the path to liberation? It is, importantly, the living vehicle of the Dhamma. It is the vehicle of the teaching since it is entrusted with the transmission of the canon and with scholarly work on it. Special arrangements were made to ensure the accurate recitation of the texts (Vism 74–76). Regarding the entrusting of scholarship on the canon to the Sangha (until modern times, when the better scholars tended to be university educated and English speaking), it is interesting that the third basket, the *Tipiṭaka*, is the analysis of doctrine, *Abhidhamma* (Dpv 37). This seems to have begun developing in the first two centuries after the decease of the Buddha. It indicates how a rather austere and abstract exposition of the philosophy and the psychology was deemed important, as the composition of commentaries was later esteemed. The creation of analysis was evidently expected of the order. Significantly, this involved listing the various stages of the spiritual path, including the meditations, the nature of the sense-faculties, and the detailing of the constituents, both physical and psychological, of the human being; the classification of all types of phenomena; and, finally, the description of sequences of causality. The analyses are not to be divorced from contemplation, however, since many of the items were used in meditation—for

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instance, the constituents of the human being. Although the *Abhidhamma* has been thought of as being scholastic, it nevertheless is continuous with analytic meditation. This is where the juncture between philosophy and the path of liberation is most evident. We have already noted, too, that psychology is the central engine for a Buddhist understanding of the cosmos. The accurate understanding of human psychology is an important ingredient in training, which aims eventually at liberation. More generally, for adepts, the philosophical dimension of the Theravāda (as with most other branches of Buddhism) is of vital importance toward understanding the end that they are seeking and the means to get there. The experiential, philosophical, and ethical dimensions are indeed intertwined. It is on this triangle that the drive of Buddhism is based. So the *Abhidhamma* sets forth in systematic ways the whole realm of forces that the mystic needs to cope with and use.

This leads to a further observation about the Sangha: it should be an organization that facilitates traversing of the path. If we accept that Buddhism considers greed, hatred, and delusion to be the great obstacles to the good life (VnA 31 ff.), we can understand how the order protects its members and pious laypeople from these faults: the rules that govern possessions and eating protect us against greed; the order's community spirit protects against hatred; and its analysis protects against ignorance and delusion. Buddhist meditations begin to tackle the problem of egos, while monks and nuns are encouraged, through imaginative practice, to suffuse the world of living beings with benevolence and compassion and with joy at other's joy (SnA 128; S V 118). It is within this framework of practice that the study of the *Abhidhamma* is important. Its abstract style leads beyond the bright illustrations of mythic stories. Mara dissolves into spiritual forces that hinder the individual from attaining her or his goal. In brief, the analytic philosophy and psychology of the third basket has a practical reference to the contemplative life as it was conceived in the Theravāda two millennia ago.

We may note that the scriptures depict role models for the mystic—above all, the Buddha but, of course, notable arhats as well. This is one of the main jobs of the *Therīgāthā* and the *Theragāthā*: to reveal the values of the faith through the lives of its saints. They are role models, of course, for the pious layperson and for the community as a whole, but also for the Sangha itself as it threads its way through history and geography. There was never absolute agreement about the criteria of sanctity. Thus, the first major schism in the Buddhist tradition concerned such questions. The proponents of the new school of the Great Sangha (the *Mahāsanghikas*) were in favor of slightly relaxing the severity of the tests of arhatship. Notably they allowed that an arhat might have a “wet dream,” accounted for as a visit by a *devatā* and hence involuntary on the person's part. Who knows? Maybe the incidence of nighttime lust reduced the number of candidate saints too drastically? Further, they allowed that a saint might be ignorant on some matters, that he might receive instruction from another and that he might enter the path as a result of spoken words only. All this indicates a prior very high standard of sainthood—as though the saint should be omniscient in matters affecting doctrine and the Buddha's teaching. Perhaps the relative laxity of the *Mahāsanghikas* helped to further elevate the Buddha. This, in turn, could lead to the bhakti, which was most obvious in the Pure Land stream of piety, which took on a numinous character, and a different kind of religion from the austere mysticism of the Theravāda.

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The high standard of the Theravadin saint was, in the early centuries, an encouragement, and later a cause of a lack of spiritual ambition. At first, it held up an ideal that pointed optimistically to perfectibility—the unblemished life indeed was possible and was expressed in the careers of those who trod a heroic path. But later, given the usually pessimistic Buddhist view of history, perfection came to seem to be unrealizable; nirvana no longer occurs. The backlash to this in recent times is the Vipassana movement, which restores the real possibility of sainthood, and for laypersons, too.

The scriptures also depict ways in which the contemplative life was not just a means to liberation but also a means of knowledge. In the Buddhist tradition, it was always a way of gaining insight into the facts of cosmology and psychology. As we noted apropos of the *jhānas*, each level of meditation corresponds to a level of cosmic reality. In the famous *Sutta* called the *Brahmajāla*, this is clearest (Vism 30). Here the Buddha rejects no fewer than sixty-two viewpoints, or *ditthi*s. One of the accomplishments of a meditator is to remember prior births, and this can lead to thinking that one is everlasting, occupying an everlasting universe, without end. But the two views—that the universe is endless in time and that it is not—depend on undetermined or unanswerable questions because the question is wrongly put (D II 229). Amusingly, the Buddha attributes false perception to the creator god of the brahmins. Since he, Brahma, is the first being to come into existence at the start of a world epoch, he notes that he would like to have other beings for company. When they come into existence thereafter, he wrongly concludes that he brought them into existence, when in fact they were all part of a karmic sequence that had nothing to do with Brahma. He foolishly thinks that they arose because of his creative powers. So people who trace their lives back to Brahma, as a result of meditation, confusedly believe that there is nothing before him. And so they believe in an eternal Creator.

Of course, not all fallacies derive from false inferences in meditation. But this enhances the importance of logic and reasoning in the Buddha's teaching. Since it was on the bases of logic and experience (or perception) that the Buddha founded his authority, the scriptures essentially play an auxiliary role, and not a primary one. Since experience was chiefly mystical or contemplative in character, this is the crucial practice and appeal of the Buddha's message.

Nevertheless, we have to reckon with echoes of Brahmanism. The Buddha rarely attacked brahmins. He would prefer to undermine brahmin concepts and practices by reinterpreting them in moral terms, as we have seen. If he used the abstract *brahma*, it only referred to the idea of the sacred, notably in a solemn ethical sense; hence the *brahmavihāras* were “sacred places”—that is, holy virtues that the true follower of the path ought to cultivate. And *brahmacariya* meant simply “sacred conduct”—that is, in regard to sex. In short, and as we have already seen, the Buddha sidestepped brahmin ritual and the actual role of brahmins in society and sought analogues in moral conduct. He gave credit to them where it was due but repudiated their rituals, for the most part. He would not utterly forget the notion of *śruti* (sacred oral tradition), and he seems to have seen merit in retaining his own authority, but ultimately his teachings were verifiable in individual experience. As things developed, his authority was planted most clearly in the *Sutta* basket of the *Tipiṭaka*. So the start of the *Sutta* beings with the words *evam me sutam*. The word is heard but not in the same sense as it is in Hindu revelation.

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To sum up: First, Brahmanism rested on a kind of sacramental and mantric ritual, but Buddhism did not encourage such rites. Buddhism concentrated mostly on concentration, involving the purification of consciousness. Second, the Buddhist theory of causation was inimical to both mantric causation and the use of ritual other than in a psychological manner. Third, there could not be any strict revelatory transaction between the transcendent and this world. The numinous experience of the Other is more hospitable to truly sacred revelation. This did not significantly figure in the Buddha's worldview.

Thus in this sense, the scriptures are a bit of a disappointment in the Theravadin canon, compared to the "high" views of scripture elsewhere. But because of its strong concern with psychology and analysis, parts of the canon function like handbooks for practical living, including, notably, meditation. Scripture, therefore, has powerful uses in the life of the Sangha. It contains many materials of general relevance to the wider community, beyond the loose frontier of the order. It also reflects the amazing originality of Gotama, while giving a moral prehistory in the wonderful stories of his previous births, which so often take existing material, characteristically, of the Gangetic culture and bend them to Buddhist uses. It also contains a good deal of poetry.

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D	Dīgha	Nett	Netti-pakarṇa
Dhs	Dhammasangini	S	Samyutta
Dpvs	Dīpavamsa	Sn	Sutta-nipāta
IT	Itivuttaka	Th1	Theragāthā
J	Jātaka	Th2	Therigāthā
M	Majjhima	Vbh	Vighanga
Mhvs	Mahavamsa	Vin	Vinaya
Miln	Milindapañha	Vism	Visuddhimaggā
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Theravāda and Processes: Nirvāṇa as a Meta-process

The supposition that the Buddha banned certain questions because they are not conducive to liberation does not get to the root of the matter, for a very obvious reason: a merely pragmatic discouragement of speculation would be ineffective. It is true that the simile of the person struck by an arrow might favor the pragmatic interpretation, but the simile of the fire going out points in quite a different direction. I would like here to recast a discussion I first expressed in 1964, and then to suggest a way of looking at *nibbāna* (Skt. *nirvāṇa*) which is somewhat novel and might produce reverberations both with the thinking of Schopenhauer and with some Mahāyāna notions, not to mention with process thought.

In my 1964 discussion I took a position not unlike that of K. N. Jayatilleke in his famous *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, namely a kind of Wittgensteinian interpretation of the undetermined questions or *avyākatāni*. The Theravādin list of these includes, of course, questions about the finitude of the cosmos as to space and time, about the identity or otherwise of the *jīva* or soul and the body, and about the existence or otherwise of the *Tathāgata*. It appears to me that all these issues are secretly or overtly about the same thing, namely *nibbāna*. How so? First, the finitude of the cosmos is not just a physical or astronomical question. Its deeper meaning is about whether there is something beyond or outside the cosmos. There is in a sense an end to the cosmos, when the *arhant* deceases, for then the cosmos ends (for him at least). But that sort of end of the cosmos is not some literal boundary. Then second, the question about the *jīva* cannot be fully explicated without taking *nibbāna* into account. What the Buddha did in effect was to jettison the permanent self or *ātman* in favor of the possibility of *nibbāna*. In other words, he kept to a main function of the self namely to be a liberated entity in due course. But

he cut out the entity. A living being is capable of liberation. In other ways the notion of a permanent self is both useless and pernicious: useless because what does not change cannot be a factor in changes; and pernicious because it may conduce to egocentrism. Regarding its uselessness, one can spell this out by thinking of an unchanging S underlying a series of events, e1, e2 and so on. Since it is assumed that S is the same during both e1 and e2 it cannot account for e3.

To use an informal example: if I burst into song at e3, this can hardly be due to my skull which is unchanged all through (relatively speaking). It must be due to some other factor (my remembering my beloved, say). But in substituting *nibbāna*'s possibility for the unchanging self, the Buddha rendered the question of the *jīva* and the body puzzling. The intent of the question is to ascertain whether the soul can be separated from the body. It can't really: but yet there is the possibility of *nibbāna*, that is of a kind of liberation (and attaining that is a main function of the self or soul). Finally, and third, the question about the Tathāgata is more obviously about *nibbāna*. The Tathāgata has attained *nibbāna* in this life, but is not going to be reborn at death. What should we say, then, about survival?

The example of the going out of the flame points to the unanswerability of questions about *nibbāna* because they are wrongly posed. You can ask when a flame went out but not where it went. We may treat the *avyākatāni* in a Wittgensteinian manner as being radically senseless. They are worse than the question "Is the king of France bald?" because, while it is merely contingent that there is a king of France (and we might also joke that Mitterand is the king of France), it is not *contingent* that *nibbāna* 'transcends' events in time and space. Given the Buddha's analysis of the nature of the cosmos, *nibbāna* is *necessarily* non-cosmic, is *necessarily* not in time and space. So questions about it are intrinsically unanswerable, if unanswerable at all. Those questions resemble more "Is the letter F in love?" than "Is the king of France bald?"

Let me lay alongside this observation the fact that the Theravādin writings ascribe omniscience to the Buddha. Maybe there was an element of one-up-man-ship in this, to counter claims that Māhavīra was omniscient. But even so there were other beliefs, such as that giving the Buddha special cognitive powers (the *dasabala*), which implied that he had preternatural insight. It would be assumed therefore that he knew the true nature of *nibbāna*. But of course the incapacity to answer a wrongly formed question is not a defect in

knowledge. No one could know whether the letter F is in love or not. Had the Buddha merely been warning people not to waste their time with 'metaphysical' questions he would have known the true answers to the undetermined questions, and withheld these. Yet he is not supposed to have had the closed fist of the teacher. It is more logical to think of the questions as being radically unanswerable, so that even a Buddha could not make sense of them. His failure to know the answers would not be a defect in his knowledge.

But he might know something else: namely, *why* the questions were unanswerable. No doubt *arhants* could grasp this too. And possibly we might know that. Now, above I have suggested that there is *necessity* about the senselessness of the questions because it is necessary that *nibbāna* does not exist (or occur) as an empirical state. More explicitly the Buddha says in *Suttanipāta* v. 1076: there is no measuring the individual who has ended the process of rebirth.

The key terminology here is: *na pamānamatthi*. There is no way of estimating the liberated individual, and no perceptual access. For that matter, there is no access through reasoning. We can also reverse our perspective and look to the analysis of the individual and her world in the Theravāda. The person is a mere conditioned process in interaction with her environment and involving the concurrence of the *khandhas*. There was thus no individual to refer to when she was no longer reborn. In short the individual was radically non-existent in *nibbāna*: so her absence is something of necessity rather than contingency. But yet there is something mysterious about individuals which so to speak lies beyond the complex of processes which makes each of them. That extra is the possibility of *nibbāna*. But it is not as if this possibility is a something, even if in the Mahāyāna the concept of the Buddha-nature sounds as if it is a kind of ingredient in the individual's make-up or constitution. The possibility merely signifies that in certain circumstances there is no more rebirth and the conditioned processes are replaced by some X which is unthinkable, indefinable.

Parenthetically, there is a question which we need to deal with to tidy up our account. Attaining *nibbāna* is of course something the saint does in this life: so perhaps someone attains it at the age of thirty and then lives to eighty. During his fifty years of emancipated life (a form of *jīvanmukti* or living liberation) a person retains his 'substrate' — his bodily and mental constituents. We have hitherto been talking of *nibbāna* without substrate, when the saint passes away. This-life *nibbāna* might be said to involve the perception of or insight into 'the' X.

At death, then, the individual stream of processes which has had as a part of itself the perception of or insight into the X is replaced by the X. This, roughly, is the schema presented in the Theravādin context.

Now, there is perhaps for some readers the issue as to whether a transcendent X can be more like a process than a being. Let me briefly explore this issue. The concept of transcendence in the Western tradition has been typically interwoven with the notion of an ultimate being (God, the Creator). And so there has been a picture presented: the cosmos of beings over against the one Being which or who created the cosmos. Therefore it has been natural to write of a transcendent being. There have been those however, notably Paul Tillich, who have wished to indicate that God as transcendent is not a being, and so have used some other locution: "being itself." Being is by analogy with a being, but is not in space (or time). In the West there has been little interest in the notion of a transcendent which is not a being. What about a transcendent process or event? The first reaction could be negative: how can you have a Process in itself, or an event beyond time? After all, processes and events presuppose time. Well, does not a being presuppose space? If you escape upwards into being, why could the Buddhist not similarly ascend to Process or Event? Perhaps that is what *nibbāna* is—a process beyond processes or maybe, better, process beyond processes. (There is an extra complication to the comparison: God is usually conceived as not being-itself only but as a person, but we can leave this point on one side here.)

It does not seem to me more contradictory to think of process than of being as transcendent. And so we could think of the Buddha's message as claiming that there is process-in-itself beyond the impermanent processes of this world. Or, as Buddhist philosophy developed into the thesis of momentariness, then there is, so to speak, the ultimate moment which lies beyond the moments of *samsāra*. This might be a way of bringing out the radical anti-substantialism of the Buddha. For we can imagine various dispositions of the notions of substance and non-substance in various systems of metaphysics. We can have the Aristotelian substance-substances dualism, contrasting God as the ultimate substance with a cosmos itself made up of substances. Or we could have a substance to non-substance dualism, contrasting God as the ultimate substance with a cosmos itself made up of substances. Or we could have a substance to non-substance

dualism, in which God is contrasted with the world seems as a congeries of non-substances, that is events. This is found in, for instance, Islamic occasionalism. In a rather different mode, there is the notion of one substance and the rest mirage. Or again there is the possibility of a non-substance underlying a non-substantial world. Usually this has been expressed in the Buddhist case by recourse to the idea of the *śūnyatā* underlying or making up the 'real' nature of events, etc.

Now let us return to the undetermined questions. If my analysis is correct they are all unanswerable because they involve a component in the reply which is indefinable, the unknowable X which is *nibbāna*. There is not an answer to the question whether the cosmos has an end, because such end as it does have (namely the attainment of *nibbāna*) cannot be expressed. If a series of events, for instance the events making up the life of the Tathāgata, is capped by an ultimate Event, then it is neither correct to affirm that the Buddha lives on nor that he does not. Of course, ordinary and ignorant speech can take over. It became customary to think of Buddha as being 'there' in some mysterious and confused sense, so that he could be revered and concretized into statues, etc. The function of Buddhist dialectics in its many forms is to explode this ever-recurrent substantializing tendency and deconstruct the ultimate (as well as this world). If the characteristic of the Mahāyāna was to move from the emptiness of the *skandhas* or groups of events making up the individual to the emptiness of all *dharmas* or constituent elements of the cosmos, then the dialectic could move from the undetermined questions as confined to the list

To expand this point further, we could think of the Theravāda as essentially *skandha*-oriented and of the Mahāyāna as *dharma*-oriented. The undetermined questions in the Theravāda relate to the individual, even when they are ostensibly about the *loka* or cosmos. This explains why the scope of the question is not universalized. On the other hand, once one gets the idea that it is not just from the point of the individuals that there is emptiness, but that the indeterminacy of language applies to the inner nature of everything, then *nibbāna* becomes, so to speak, pervasive (which it is not in the Theravāda). And because this is so then the ultimate nature of everything is indefinable.

It might still be asked as to whether we can do anything to render the idea of process-itself more intelligible. It is supposedly a

transcendent ‘event’ or ‘series of events’ by analogy with *samsāric* processes. Now when we try to explain how it is that the transcendent being is non-spatial, we can use the analogy of the mind — thoughts, for example, cannot be strictly located. The thought of the battle of Waterloo is not to the left of my right ear. It is not reasonable to apply lateral spatial predicates to thoughts and a lot else besides. Is there an analogous non-temporal ‘event’ which does not take temporal predicates? Perhaps we could use the parallel of the specious present: a holistic ‘stretch’ of consciousness might be seen as having internally no before or after. Likewise, the momentary flicker of consciousness postulated in the *Abhidhamma* and post-canonical literature. (Between each flicker, by the way, momentary death is thought to occur: if only one could stop the onward march of instants, one would attain a momentary state which would be deathless, *amata*.) In such a way one might begin to think of a timeless process, as being-itself is a non-spatial ‘thing.’ The substitution in a sequence of a timeless process for temporal processes would be a way of analyzing *nibbāna*. All this is a deduction from Buddhist non-substantialism. I shall go on to elaborate some consequences we might draw from this.

But here let us digress a moment, in relation to the motives for desubstantialization. One main motive no doubt was conceptual or philosophical. This had at least two roots. First, there was the Buddhist critique of language, in opposition to the way brahmins reified and even divinized the sacred Vedic tongue. Conventionalism raises the possibility — and for Buddhism the actuality — of the systematically misleading character of language. There was no question of some primordial fit between words and things. It was but a short step to saying that language errantly pushes us towards belief in substances, because of the lordly way of nouns. Second, the Buddhist emphasis on causality, and its flowering in *asatkāryavāda*, left no great place for substances. If a substance is unchanging then it cannot explain anything. And if it changes it can be boiled down into its episodes. Beyond these philosophical thoughts there lay a distrust of substance, no doubt, as being the typical language of ritual. One thing is transubstantiated into another. Brahmins liked the sticky talk of substance: after all, holy power was a kind of thing residing in the brahmin himself, not to mention the Holy Power of Brahman itself. Early Buddhism has a perception of the Brahmanical *āstika* religion analogous to McKim Marriott’s modern theory of Hindu substance. (The fact that Buddhism was such a vital ingredient, sometimes

dominant in Indian classical civilization, such Hinduizing theories as that of Dumont have to be treated skeptically.) Substantialism encourages also collectivist thinking, and Buddhism has a remarkably individualistic coloration. And so the Buddhist espousal of processes and conventionalism has a religious as well as a philosophical meaning.

What are the more general implications of thinking of the transcendent as being more like a process than a thing? First, it is easier to think of it as neither singular nor plural. The fault with Kant's noumena is that they are plural, and yet by Kantian doctrine that is an absurdity. Second, when coupled with Buddhist critique of language it suggests that there does indeed lie something beyond both our perceptions and our theories of reality. Nevertheless, Buddhism has not, I believe, thought through a major point concerning the distinction between phenomena and 'noumena' or the beyond. Before we get to that, a point can be made about the very idea of phenomena. The assumption of some philosophical literature is that phenomena do not have intellectual content (so to speak). The fact is that the way we look at the world is often suffused with concepts: there is a table, there a mountain, here the color red, here my friend. Perception is typically propositional. Further, though some physical entities are beyond direct perception they can be seen by the means of instrumentation. Galaxies invisible to the naked eye can be seen through the telescope. So when we talk about what is perceptible we really mean technologically-enhanced-perception-accessible. But not only that: even such enhanced perception does not perceive all the theories which clothe the phenomena, so to speak. In short, this-worldly phenomena are more than phenomena in the old-fashioned sense, as intended by Kant. So we can say that phenomena in the way in which we ought to be using the idea are not strictly perceptual phenomena. Perhaps we should use another term: maybe, the graspable.

But we recognize that there is always a hinterland to the graspable. On the other hand, the frontier between what we grasp and what lies beyond is forever shifting. We have, in a dialectic with nature, extended our grasping from the atom downwards to the quark, and who knows what beyond that? If we take a Mahāyāna perspective, we could interpret Buddhist philosophy in a quasi-Kantian sense, as affirming that beyond graspable processes there lies process in itself, always eluding our theories, concepts and percep-

tions, even if retreating along an advancing frontier of knowledge. There could be analogies here with Schopenhauer. The world could be described as process and representation (rather than will, in my view a badly chosen analogy).

We might view mainstream Mahāyāna philosophy from this point of view as postulating an empty and indescribable process underlying or pervading the graspable cosmos (*loka*). This seems an apt account of how we might view that which is scientifically and otherwise accessible on the one hand and what lies 'beyond' on the other. The indescribable challenges us, and turns up problems of unforeseen kinds to refute or modify our theories. The concept of nature sometimes serves in the West to comprise both process in itself and the graspable phenomena.

However, this notion of a wider application of the transcendent in Mayāyāna seems indeed different from the more limited scope of the idea in the Theravāda. Before I come to that, it is important to see that the notion of the transcendent as I have used it does not significantly differ from that of the immanent. This is a thesis not often grasped in Western thinking. After all, both *transcendent* and *immanent* are bits of jargon relying on spatial metaphors, that is those contained in the prefixes *trans*- or beyond and *im*- or within. It is clear that if we say (for instance) that God transcends the cosmos we do not literally mean that she is in a different part of space beyond space. Nor if we say that he or she is within all things that by cutting open the cheese you will find God in there. So neither beyond nor in is a literal direction. Do analogical directions point differently? The fact is that both the transcendent and the immanent are non-spatial in a literal sense. But the use of the different terms does point to something. One could put this in the Buddhist context as follows.

In the Theravādin context *nibbāna* is transcendent. It is beyond events. But it does not pervade. It is not a Theravādin idea at all that *nibbāna* is 'behind' events or that *samsāra* equals *nibbāna*. It is not as though every event is 'secretly' *śūnyatā*. Of course in a suitably defined sense of emptiness every event is empty. But the Theravāda does not extend its transcendental minimalism the way that the Great Vehicle does. There is no tendency to see *nibbāna* 'in' everything (that is in all processes or events). On the other hand, even if *within* taken analogically has no intrinsic difference of placement to *outside* or *beyond*, the Mahāyāna thinks of the characteristics of *nibbāna* as pervasive. The reason is as stated earlier that the Theravāda is more

subjective, more psychological, more focussed on the individual and his or her experience. Passage through the world is a lone pilgrimage, with, however, help and advice from others, down a kind of *karmic* tunnel with light at the other end, namely *nibbāna*, which is a kind of transcendental event or process. The Mahāyāna picture is somewhat diverse: all events ultimately exhibit liberation, and the liberating experience is seeing that this is so. To put it another way: the Theravādin theory is not so dependent on the idea of realization, even if the forces which bind us to the world have at their root *avijjā*. A sort of ontology dominates over saving epistemology. But of course I recoil at the word 'ontology' in so far as Buddhism rejects both being and beings.

There are no doubt religious reasons for the philosophical position of the Mahāyāna as against the Theravāda. Let me put it this way: the Theravāda was centrally concerned with meditation. Meditation and analysis were the keys to liberation. Can there be doubt of that? It might be that emphasis would swing, so that sometimes monastic communities could think that analysis (therefore scholarship) was their primary concern. And of course, obviously enough, monastic communities can easily forget their primary concerns anyway: witness some of the politics of monkhood over the last thirty-five years in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, the Mahāyāna was increasingly inclined towards some of the main values of Hinduism (so called). And so the sentiments of *bhakti*, itself in origin maybe owing much to Buddhist influence, came to be directed towards the ultimate. Devotional Buddhism personalized the character of transcendent Buddhas. But it also contributed to the idea that the ultimate is somehow *pervasive*. The notion of *nibbāna* as pervasive could encourage the idea that the Buddha pervades, control everything from within (but not in a literal sense). So for these reasons the Mahāyāna went for a more substantive and pervasive role for the concept of *nibbāna*. These shadowy substantialized tendencies in the Indian Mahāyāna were reinforced by Tantra. The more magical and ritualistic phases of Buddhism (which I would regard ultimately as a betrayal of Buddhist conventionalism and the early moralization of Brahmin religious values, etc.) reinforced the 'ontological' tendencies of the religion, taking it very far from the Theravāda. So both *bhakti* and *tantra* contained forces which underlined what may be called the 'pervasionism' of the Great Vehicle.

The net result of the foregoing discussion is that the Theravādin's pointing to transcendent process helps to explain the force of the

undetermined questions. If the Buddha knew everything, then he knew what was knowable. But the transcendent *nibbāna* which was the light at the end of the tunnel of individual existence was unknowable and without the possibility of exposition. Consequently all those undetermined questions, each of which involves direct or indirect reference to *nibbāna*, are intrinsically unanswerable. Whether the Buddha himself had any glimpse of the Mahāyāna extension of this idea is also for us (but contingently, because of the sparsity of reliable historical data) unknowable.

But there are ideas which could emerge from the thoughts I have sketched, for future philosophers to take up. We could easily adopt the model of the universe as having, in addition to the conceptually-impregnated and technology-extended phenomena, a hinterland of process which is as yet unknowable to us, because theories have not yet caught up with it, or penetrated more deeply into it. Whether the world (cosmos) is 'infinite' in this respect is worth thinking about. Could it be that we could never completely occupy the hinterland and understand everything? It seems to me doubtful for various reasons. How could we ever know that the 'edge' of the universe was without its own hinterland?

In brief it seems to me that the questions raised by the undetermined question are fertile today, and need to be corralled within the fences of historical scholarship.

The Dramatic Effect of the Buddha on Western Theories of Religion

MUCH OF WESTERN THEORIZING ABOUT RELIGION IS PREDICATED ON ignorance or neglect of a great counterexample, namely Theravada Buddhism.¹ It distresses me that such neglect and ignorance persists: It is largely due to neocolonialist contempt for a wide and generous view of non-Western civilization, even among many who take up bits and pieces of the East or South in their scholarship or scientific inquiry. So often the East gets filtered through Western preconceptions through the ideas of Feuerbach, Marx, Eliade, Durkheim, or Otto. Some of these theorists made, of course, greater efforts than others to look more objectively outside of their European spectacles. Though the message of the refutation of many of their ideas by the data of the Theravada (not to mention Jainism and other traditions) has been publicized for many years, though often ignored, I cannot forbear to spell out the message in this present argument.

One major strand of Western thinking has been a creative, but flawed, one, namely projection theory. We could look upon Feuerbach no doubt as the father of this notion, and from him we have Marxian theory of religion, Freudianism and post-Marxian and post-Freudian theorists. So I shall begin by seeing how Feuerbach stands up to the Theravada. By the way, the fact that he was ignorant of it should not be blamed on him. He lived at a time largely ignorant of the accurate history of religions. His famous *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* was published in 1843. It is surprising how in the arts and social sciences we rely, in scientific matters, on our ignorant ancestors. Nevertheless, he was creative: His notions affected a great swathe of Western intellectuality. That does not prevent his ideas, of

course, from being profoundly unrealistic. When you consider that probably the two great myths of the twentieth century, namely Marxism and Freudian theory, were both amazingly unproductive and largely wrong, it is sobering to think of Feuerbach as being a major influence on both streams of thought. Let us now consider briefly why his ignorance affected his theory. In brief, it was because he did not listen to the Buddha. How could he?

He wrote, in the famous book I have cited:

The task of the modern era was the realization and humanization of God—the transformation and dissolution of theology into anthropology.²

He did not mean by anthropology what we usually mean today. He meant by it the doctrine of man (or humanity). As he forcefully put it:

In place of the illusory, fantastic, heavenly position of God which in actual life necessarily leads to the degradation of man (the human being), I substitute the tangible, actual and consequently also the political and social position of (hu)mankind. The question concerning the existence or non-existence of God is for me nothing but the question concerning the existence or non-existence of man (the human being).³

In brief, Feuerbach held that in some manner the worship of God was rooted in human nature and yet rested on illusion. How are we to understand this?

There are two sides of Feuerbach's general thesis. First, the attributes projected onto God are human attributes, though stripped of the limits that they possess as applied to individual human beings. Second, they are projected onto something other than humanity. They are ideal and deceptively other: They idealize humanity in a certain way. The human being is thus alienated from her own perfections. Unfortunately, Feuerbach uses the confused notion (as did Marx) of the species-being. Religion is the alienation between individuals and the species-being: ideal humanity as a whole.

In all this I have looked perhaps too briefly at Feuerbach. He was creating in his own mind a new theology (just as Marx was, though he used differing terminology: Marx was not scientific in any modern sense). Anyway, Feuerbach's projection fit in with later views of the

falseness of religion. But the projectionism did not work with the Buddha. Here was a religion, the Theravada, which was at best secondarily polytheistic (what I called “transpolytheistic atheism”—an atheism transcending the gods). But it did not involve projecting qualities onto a creative Other. The Buddha was supposed to be human. Even if you might patch up Feuerbach in order to save his theory, the schema in no way fitted Freud's.

It seems amazing to me that a religion that permeated a large part of human civilization, namely Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, together with China and East Asia, should so little correspond to the model of the father figure with which Freud worked: and yet should be so little noticed in the empirical evaluation of Freudian theory. By an irony, some Buddhist scholars have used Freudian theory in order to criticize Western religion, not taking cognizance of the fact that the Buddhist counterexample should, in principle, be fatal to Freudian theory itself. Are we to suppose that a differing social psychological dynamic pertains to Southeast Asian society from that which pertains in Vienna?

It is worth commenting that the strand of thinking that runs from Feuerbach to Peter Berger, via Marx and Freud, namely the projectionist strand, is unscientific in an important respect. It assumes the falsity of religion and more particularly its lack of power—its epiphenomenal status. The question of whether religious ideas, experiences, and so forth have independent power is in the long run an empirical one and not to be decided by ideological predilection. From this standpoint we should adopt a phenomenological approach, that is, suspending judgment as to the truth or otherwise of claims. In particular, it is important to take a cool look at religious experiences. Here I shall prepare the way for an appraisal of Theravada Buddhism's religious role by considering a rather different theory from that of either Feuerbach or Freud, namely Rudolf Otto's account of the numinous experience in his famous *The Idea of the Holy* (1917).⁴

He thought of the core experience of religion as manifesting the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. He gave a haunting account of the awe-inspiring experience of the Other. However, his description singularly failed to take account of the kind of mystical or contemplative experience that figures centrally in the contemplative life of the Theravada—in particular in the *jhanas*—and that is expressed as the

nondual experience of emptiness in the Great Vehicle or Mahayana. While the numinous experience carries polarity within it, generally mystical experience involves the vanishing of the subject-object polarity. In brief, while Otto may be quite correct in picking on the numinous as a very important experiential motif in religion, there are other patterns of spiritual experience, notably the mystical or contemplative. And why not? There is no special reason to think that all religions depend on one kind of experience, even allowing for variations brought on by divergences of interpretative framework. Since there is very little in the Theravada of the prophetic and turbulent experiences and conversions that play such a vital role in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament, we can see it as a religion of mysticism without God and without the "Thus spake the Lord" motif—the "Thus spake the Other" pattern. It is true that the Buddha may have occasionally inspired awe. But he was not, like Isaiah, one who perceived the numinous Other. Enlightenment is different. Insight in the mystical sense is different. And so Otto's theory, as a total offering, is slain by the Theravada: We should, rather, espouse a two-or-more-kind-of religious-experience theory. In brief, Otto, as such, is refuted by the Theravada. But an Otto-plus view can be maintained.

Given all this, we can begin to ask whether religious experience has its independent power to explain anything else. It first of all helps to explain religious dualism (between God and worshippers); it also helps to explain ideas of union with the Divine, where the experientially apprehended Other is also met in nondual mystical encounter. It helps to explain nirvana, where there is no Other to be united with. Moreover, religious experience plus surrounding sentiments and feelings helps to account for some of the spiritual power of some movements. To put matters more concretely: Vishnu can enter powerfully into an individual's life, independently of whether such a God "really" exists. Phenomenological objects are not nothing and can have their own power. From this point of view the phenomenological investigator of religions and worldviews should take a "realistic" view of the foci of religion, without initially determining what the truth may be of a given worldview or religion. So it turns out that investigations turn out to be more complicated than we thought, both in terms of the variety of types of religious experience and in terms of the ontological status, so to speak, of the foci of religious experience

and practice. So far Theravada Buddhism has called not just Feuerbach and Freud into question but Otto as well.

Because of the grip of Freudianism, for all its feeble empirical grounding, among intellectuals, it is not surprising that even today, when the institutionalization of religious studies is much better embedded in universities, poorly supported theories in that tradition still abound. Most notable among these is the Girardian view of sacrificial religion and violence. He considers that sacrifice provides a mechanism for defusing violence between human groups. Internecine aggressions are forever being channeled outward, leaving communities as peaceful entities. Girard takes blood sacrifice as a constant in the history of religions. This is simply not so. Some small-scale societies do not have it. And, certain major religious traditions do not have it even metaphorically. Notably—you have guessed it—Theravada Buddhism. But you could mention Jainism, too. Girard's selective reading of the evidence has no feel for other cultures. He sees the world through the funnel of Western history going back to Israel, and through, also, the funnel of a once fashionable evolutionism, which has perhaps its chief early exemplar in Comte. Comte's pattern of history simply does not work across Asia. So the Theravada slays both Girard and Comte, as well as its previously named victims, Feuerbach, Freud, and Otto.

There are a number of modern scholars who find the heart of religion in myth. One can think of Jung, Campbell, Eliade, and Doniger. But the Theravada has some queries to place upon this approach. While these scholars are less narrow than Girard and indeed have made interesting or important contributions to our field, they fail to be balanced in their account of worldviews. In particular, they could not paint a realistic portrait of the Theravada. Of course, myth or sacred narrative is a significant ingredient in religions and enters in its way into secular ideologies, notably nationalisms (so potent in today's world). But a number of religions also incorporate important doctrinal or philosophical ideas into their worldviews. Such ideas may not be altogether theoretical, since they are tied into practice. But they are important and often elude the psychoanalytic mode of explanation. Let me give a few examples. First, Christianity emerging as a rounded worldview in the fourth century incorporated much of Neoplatonism, which melded in with its increasing concern

for monasticism and meditation. Second, medieval Hindu theisms sought to cast themselves in the mold of various forms of Vedanta and such other systems as Kashmiri Shaivism and Saiva Siddhanta. Third, the neo-Confucian movement incorporated the ethics and practices of the tradition in a strongly philosophical framework. Fourth, consider such Mahayana schools as Madhyamika and Vijnanavada. And very obviously early Buddhism and the Theravada had a whole series of philosophical formula to direct and go with meditative practices. The Pali Canon is obviously much more analytical and philosophical than the New Testament. Consider: the three marks of existence, the twelvefold links of dependent origination, the five khandhas, the six sense fields, the four noble truths, the eightfold path, and so on. All this added up to a pretty coherent and subtle philosophy. By comparison, the mythic fabric of the Theravada is less luxuriant. There is the story of the Buddha, the previous lives, the chronicles of Sri Lanka, the prediction of a future Buddha. But there is nothing as rich as the Hindu galaxy, nor is mythic history as important as in Christianity or Judaism. Anyway, having a high philosophical content makes the Theravada less easy to write off through psychological approaches or to represent as a new psychoanalytical faith. For it turns out that psychoanalysis has the shape of faith: It is a religion for California perhaps!

Because Buddhism has a philosophical side to it, it can be less comprehensively analyzed by the methods of the above-mentioned theorists of religion. Moreover, those theorists in concentrating on myth often neglect other dimensions of religion, such as the social, the experiential, and so on. It is strange that often in holding both evolutionary and psychological analyses of religion, historians of religion often decapitate it and identify the deep with the "primitive." Also, a singularly large part of theorizing about worldviews comes out of the anthropological tradition (generated by colonialist mentality rather even than an imperialist one, which often was instrumental in generating civilizational renewal). The ideal society from the anthropological angle was finite and woven well together: wonderful for Levi-Strauss. But how could you work his magic amid the complexities of the Roman Empire or the medieval pluralism of India? Anyway, it is important to have a multidimensional view of religion, which is singularly lacking in some of our main theorists. In particular, the philosophical aspect of religion has often been neglected by

theorists. And yet it is a strong feature of the Theravada and one of its attractions to Westerners who become Buddhists. When you see also what philosophers have contributed to the revival of Buddhism, philosophy seems even less apposite to neglect: I am thinking of persons such as Malalasekara, Jayatilleke, and Rahula in modern Sri Lanka.

I might add an aside that Eliade, like some others, tended to impose his own ideology or religious worldview on the facts. It was in its way fruitful, but it was unscientific. Secretly, of course, throughout his career, he was preaching—a version of religious fascism or extreme nationalism exalting his people and calling for a new kind of revival through history of religions. It is sad to see how our most lethal worldviews, fascism and Marxism, have made their way romantically among so many Western intellectual circles. We are not rid of their influence despite the holier-than-thou preachings of postmodernism.

In discussing Otto and Eliade, I am referring to what may be called religious theorists of religion. There have been others particularly concerned with mysticism in particular. Particularly influential have been Stace and Zaehner (and one might mention that prince of perennialists, Aldous Huxley). They have tended to see mysticism as involving at least a perception of the Self. This is in contradiction with the Theravada. And yet the Theravada practices a nontheistic yoga. Consequently, Zaehner was misguided, to prop up his theory, to see a doctrine of the Self in Buddhism despite everything. It is much more economical to see the situation as one in which similar experiences are interpreted, in accord with foregoing religious or philosophical positions, as involving no self or a Self or a Divine Being. All these are compatible with the nondual nature of the contemplative experience.

Insofar as Huxley saw the mystical experience as the core (as Otto saw the numinous as the core), he was wrong. His doctrines do not appeal among numinously Calvinist folk or prophetic Zulus or revivalist Muslim brothers or traditionalist Jews. Even shamans might not like it. My observation is elementary and based on the Theravada. Theravadins do not themselves easily identify with theistic mystics, even if they recognize the contemplative aspect of the others' faith.

If there are problems with Zaehner, how much more are there problems with those, like Radhakrishnan and Hick, who see all reli-

gions pointing to the same Real or Reality. Theirs is, in part, a theory about religions and, in part, a theology of a world religion. In its latter aspect it is benign. In many ways I like it. Vivekananda's version was a fine basis of Indian pluralism. It helped to underpin the constitution of India and to promote the notable tolerance that has existed there since 1947.

Let me deal with Hick as exemplar of this new perennialism. He postulates that every religion points to a single Reality. We can point to the Tao, the Great Ultimate, the Void, Brahman, the Divine Being, the Great Spirit . . . good: Everyone has a sort of God. Never mind if the Tao is not exactly a Being, still less the Void. Still, it might work out. But nirvana is not a being or Being itself. Buddhism does not lean toward Tillich. Nor toward the notion of a Copernican Other out there that "our" representations represent. Nirvana is a focus of endeavor but not a target of worship nor a Reality that manifests itself symbolically and in ritual to us.

So if we are to have a global ideology, it will not be the Hick Copernican notion nor Wilfred Cantwell Smith's more personalist and Protestant version nor, alas, Vivekananda's benign pluralism. The alternative I like and have evolved is a Form of Complementarism, in which the differing religions may share an undefined transcendental level and in which they present complementary foci. As complementary they can undertake a critique of one another—friendly, we hope. God no doubt gave us differing religions to keep each other honest. The Theravada, then, presents an obstacle to the belief in a unitary Reality lying behind all religions. Thus far, the Theravada is a hammer of Feuerbach, Freud, Girard, Otto, Eliade, Zaehner, Huxley, and Hick.

There are other things to say in regard to the Theravada's effects on our Western theorizing. Seeing that the will is not part of the inner furniture of the self in Buddhism or indeed in the Hindu tradition, why should Kant have taken it so seriously? Why should it have played such an important part in the West? Need we take it seriously?

This is the kind of question that the comparative study of cultures raises. But the globe is melding. We shall soon be one global culture, all plunged in the same media swamp and all dominated by the same voices on the Internet. The prizing of divergences will be ever more important to us. So the charming tones of the Buddha should remain a challenge to us. The fact that they call in question so many

of the theories of the Western study of religion should not depress us but merely remind us that our studies are still at an early stage, largely because of the conceptual hubris of the Western mind. Yet we have in the last thirty years, since religious studies burst upon our academic scene, also made great progress. If we have sometimes not lived up to the promises and premises of our study, it is mostly because we have ground our own axes, still thinking that private agendas are important in the pursuit of truth. They are not. That is one of the lessons that the Theravada teaches us at a personal level.

NOTES

1. Theravada Buddhism is important in its own right. It is important also as being a main and fruitful focus of the scholarship and life of Edmund Perry, in whose honor I have the privilege of writing this essay. He was both an old friend and an admired colleague, who did so much both at Northwestern University, through his creative guidance of the Department of the History and Literature of Religion, and in his general diagnosis of the importance of the Theravada for all those interested in religion. In this essay I want to underline the importance of the Buddha as seen through Theravadin eyes for the whole of religious studies. Hence my title. I dedicate my argument to Edmund Perry, a great scholar and a dear friend.

Much of my argument is already contained in three earlier books of mine: *Reasons and Faiths* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958); *Religion and the Western Mind* (London: Macmillan, 1986); *Buddhism and Christianity: Rivals and Allies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993). Regarding Eliade, see Adriana Berger's "Romanian Fascism and the History of Religions in the United States," in *Tainted Greatness: Anti-Semitism and Cultural Heroes*, ed. Nancy Harrowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

2. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles for the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. and intro. Manfred H. Vogel (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 1, 5.

3. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, Band II: *Philosophische Kritiken und Grundsätze* (Leipzig: O. Wigand, 1856), 410-411 quoted and translated by Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx* (New York: Humanities, 1950), 222-223.

4. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

Indian Arguments about the Existence of God

Although religious concerns are prominent throughout nearly all Indian metaphysics, the agnostic and atheistic character of much Indian religion—e. g. Jainism and Theravāda Buddhism, and the Sāṅkhya and Mīmāṁsā schools—has meant that there has been much discussion both about the existence of a Creator and about the validity of the arguments adduced for his existence.

The doubtfulness of such proofs has not, however, always been taken in an anti-theistic sense : for the truth of *śruti* or *revelation¹ may still be affirmed, and any emphasis upon divine grace can be taken to imply that it is through God's revealing activity, rather than through the intellectual efforts of men, that the truth is known. In this connection, a variety of positions is adopted. First, there is the rationalistic approach of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school : *revelation is valid, because it is the work of an omniscient Being, and the existence of the latter can be established by inference². Thus the trustworthiness of scripture is not intrinsic, but is based upon the proofs. Second, at the other extreme, Rāmānuja argues that the proofs are doubtful, because of the serious counter-arguments that can be brought against them, and belief in God rests solely upon *revelation³. Madhva, thirdly, represents an intermediate

¹ Asterisks indicate that the English words stand for certain key Sanskrit expressions and are not necessarily precise equivalents : e. g. *śruti* or “what is heard” does not in all particulars correspond to the Judaeo-Christian concept of revelation, which has a visual rather than auditory analogy built into it, and is necessarily connected with the concept *God*.

² *Nyāya Sūtra* II. i. 68; cp. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (4th impression, 1958), p. 258.

³ On *Brahma Sūtra* I. i. 3; cp. S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 3 (1940), p. 157.

position : namely, that the proofs by themselves are doubtful, if the truth of *revelation is in question; but given the truth of the latter, the proofs become convincing⁴. But even acceptance of the truth of *revelation does not settle matters, since an atheistic interpretation of it is possible, as in Sāṅkhya and Mīmāṁsā; and since also Yoga, though accepting an Iśvara or divine *Lord, does not accept a Creator. Thus the appeal to *revelation, in connection with God's existence, needs to be backed by showing that a theistic interpretation of the words of scripture is correct. But since the truth of *revelation is one main support for theism, it is useful to consider the grounds which have been advanced for it.

It is true, however, that in a way no grounds need be advanced : that is, one position is simply that *revelation is self-established (*svataḥsiddha*)⁵ or self-authenticated (*svataḥprāmānya*)⁶. Nevertheless, not only is there a wide range of interpretation as to the nature of *revelation, but also subsidiary grounds for the validity of the texts have been adduced. Under the first head, though Indian religious thought has frequently considered *revelation in a quite straightforward way, as consisting in certain words, viz. the Vedic writings, etc., there are other interpretations which radically affect the status of the texts, and thereby shift the locus of arguments about *revelation. Thus, for example, Śaṅkara's division between higher and lower knowledge is taken to imply that *revelation belongs to the latter, save only the identity-texts, i.e. those passages which affirm the identity of *Brahman* and *ātman*. (*Absolute and *self). Yet even these disappear in the state of realization and emancipation. In other words, the scriptures are valid in so far as they point towards a certain, supreme, experience—so that their truth in the last resort is pragmatic and provisional.⁷ What confirms them is experience (*anubhava*); and by then they are useless. This, clearly, modifies considerably the concept of their being self-authenticated. Here Śaṅkara's view is not so very far from that of Yoga, namely that scriptures originate from the supreme intuition in (*pratibhā*) of yogins. Hence, the issue about the validity of *revelation is shifted to that of the trustworthiness of yogic experience. Thus Kumārila raises the central problem : the experience of an individual yogin may be delusory, and so has to be checked by other evidence⁸. Likewise, the Jains argued that in so far as spiritual insight or intuition is appealed to in establishing the existence of a *Lord, it is as well to ask whether the belief in a *Lord arises from the intuition or

⁴ H. N. Raghavendrachar, *The Dvaita Philosophy and its Place in the Vedānta* (1941), p. 62.

⁵ P. N. Srinivasachari, *The Philosophy of Bhedābheda* (2nd edn revised and enlarged, 1950), p. 11.

⁶ See, e.g., Saroj Kumar Das, *Towards a Systematic Study of the Vedānta* (1931), p. 77.

⁷ See Hiriyanna, *op. cit.*, p. 358; K. C. Bhattacharya, *Studies in Vedantism*, p. 51, quoted in Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya, *Studies in the Upanishads* (1960), p. 137.

⁸ Ślokavārttika, 90 : cp. M. Hiriyanna, *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy* (1952), p. 27.

conversely⁹. Kumārila went on to affirm that the other evidence required to check the intuition was provided by scripture, which is itself accepted by the *mahājana* or general consensus¹⁰. It may be noted that the Yoga and Advaita positions, as might on other grounds have been expected, have analogies to the scriptural attitudes of Buddhism. Thus the authority of the Buddhist writings derives from that of the great Teacher; and the content of their teachings in turn originate from his supreme spiritual knowledge. Hence, with the growth of Mahāyāna ideals, and the notion that the adept himself can achieve Buddhahood, it was not surprising that the ultimate significance or reference (*artha*) of the scriptures became the non-dual experience¹¹. Yet in so far as, in both Jainism and Theravāda Buddhism, the authority of scripture derives from the omniscience (differently interpreted) of the Teacher, there is an analogy with the Nyāya position. This generated a wry problem for Vaiṣṇavite theology when the Buddha came to be regarded as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Vyāsatīrtha used the situation to argue for the inherent validity of scripture, as opposed to its deriving its authority from God's omniscience—the Buddha is divine, and yet deceived people by false teachings¹².

Regarding subsidiary grounds for holding that *revelation is true, it was often argued that its self-authentication implied its eternity—on the ground that if ever it comes into existence, this must be through some agent and then the authentication would belong to the agent¹³. Hence, not only its being eternal was thought necessary but also its being without personal authorship or *apauruṣeya*. This was peculiarly important for Mīmāṃsā, since it denied God and was distrustful of *intuition. Thus arguments were adduced against the human authorship of the Veda : for example, that tradition asserts this, that *revelation teaches the everlasting *law (*sanātana dharma*) which necessarily precedes human beings; that *revelation introduces extra, supernatural knowledge not given in human experience¹⁴. The eternity of the scriptures was, indeed, so important for Mīmāṃsā that it denied—what otherwise is universal in Indian religion—the ‘pulsating’ universe, i.e. the successive emergence and quiescence of the cosmos or (in theistic terms) the successive creation and destruction of the universe. On the other hand, Sāṃkhya argued, more naturalistically, that the Veda was of the nature of an effect, being sounds, etc., which are not eternal. Yet even those who would deny this could not always be described as fundamentalistic, because the theory that *revelation is the content of the scriptures as seen in successive ages by *r̥sis* or *seers, or communicated by God to them¹⁵, left the way open to

⁹ See Dale Riepe, *The Naturalistic Tradition in Indian Thought* (1961), 104.

¹⁰ See Ślokavārttika, 90; cp. *Kusumāñjali*, ii. 3.

¹¹ D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Lanikāvatāra Sūtra* (1930), i. p. 108.

¹² *Tarkatāndava* MS., p. 100, quoted by S. N. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, vol. iv (1949), p. 203.

¹³ See Hiriyanna, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

¹⁴ See Raghavendrachar, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹⁵ See Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, vol. i (1922), p. 404.

an interpretation of religion in terms of religious experience, and once again the locus of discussion is shifted to the nature of religious experience. It may be remarked finally that arguments for the authorlessness of *revelation were apologetically important, since they tended to assign to the *Veda* a superiority over Buddhist and Jain writings, which admittedly owed their origin and authority to persons.

We can now move from *revelation to inferences which are held to be independent of scripture. One or two of the arguments depend fairly directly upon features of one or other of the *darśanas* or *viewpoints expressed in the traditional Hindu schools. For instance, there is an interesting *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* argument which relates to *āṇus* or *atoms. It is this. The macroscopic entities in the cosmos are built up out of everlasting *atoms, which are of infinitesimal magnitude¹⁶; when two atoms combine in a dyad, there is a jump in magnitude to what can be dubbed a "minute quantum" (*hrasva*); three dyads combine into a triad, and there is jump to a "gross quantum" (*mahat pariṇāma*); it is by the addition of such *gross quanta that the magnitudes of larger bodies are generated. Thus, there is a distinction between the initial and the *gross combinations; addition of one infinitesimal to another does not yield a finite magnitude. Strictly, a single jump would have been enough: the double move to dyad and to triad is unnecessary (reminiscent of interposition of intermediaries in Gnostic doctrines of Creation). Now, the problem remains as to what it is that causes the jump from the infinitesimal to the minute. The *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* answer is that it is number. However it is further held in the *Vaiśeṣika* school (and, despite Dasgupta¹⁷, by Udayana¹⁸) that only unity is intrinsic to substances. Duality and plurality are due to "connective understanding" (*apeksābuddhi*), i. e. they are mind-dependent. However, at the beginning of a world-process when *atoms begin to combine in dyads, there are so far no rational beings in the cosmos, since their existence requires atomic complexity. It follows, then, that there must be an extra cosmic mind at the time of *sṛṣṭi* or *creation. This is God.

It may be noted that the non-theistic *Vaiśeṣika* discussed by Rāmānuja is criticized for the inexplicability of the quantum jump.¹⁹ The introduction of number as the cause, to patch up the theory, raised the epistemological problem solved by the postulation of the *Lord as the perceiver of number: but it can always be replied that here, as sometimes elsewhere with theistic arguments, the introduction of God is a sign of theoretical inadequacy.

Another type of argument which closely depends on idiosyncratic

¹⁶ Cp. Srinivasachari, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-315.

¹⁷ *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 314 n. 1.

¹⁸ *Kusumāñjali*, v. 1.

¹⁹ On *Brahma Sūtra* ii. 2 10/11.

features of a particular *viewpoint concerns the Advaitin thesis that there is only one eternal *self, identified with the *Absolute : it follows from this that any proof of the existence of the *self becomes a kind of theistic argument. In so far, however, as the *Brahman-ātman* identification depends upon *revelation, or upon a particular interpretation thereof, an essential link in the argument is theological rather than metaphysical. Further, the *Absolute, though it is the supreme reality according to Advaita, is different in concept from the creative *Lord. In the last resort, the latter, like the empirical world, is part of *māyā* or *illusion. Thus the proof of the *Lord's existence via the proofs of an eternal *self is indirect; and the proofs of a *self, whether single or plural, represent too extensive a topic to enter into now.

In addition to arguments which depend closely on features of a given *viewpoint, there is one, prominent in Indian thought, which presupposes a characteristic Indian religious concept, viz. that of karma. Thus in *Śaiva Siddhānta*, two connected considerations are advanced. First, the doctrine of karma involves that there is an apportionment of good and evil in accordance with a person's deeds. But this apportionment presupposes a perfect knowledge of the moral law, and therefore only the *Lord can regulate karma.²⁰ Second, karma is non-intelligent, and so cannot operate on its own. Nor can disembodied *selves, who are therefore without causal power,²¹ appropriate to themselves their karma. Consequently some further regulator of karma is required, and this must be God²². A similar point is made by Yoga, in rejecting the completely adequate teleology of *prakṛti* or *nature.²³ However, the notion that karma is self-operative is too deeply entrenched in Indian religious thought for such arguments to meet with much agreement, and it is commonly urged that karma as an unseen force suffices to explain what would otherwise require an intelligent Creator.²⁴ Moreover, theism and analogous beliefs (such as belief in celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the *Mahāyāna*), by making *mokṣa* or *release depend, in some degree at least, upon God, and by therefore considerably modifying the operation of karma, were often held to weaken the sense of individual effort : and this is a main reason for the rejection of theism in Jainism and *Theravāda* Buddhism²⁵ (likewise it cut at the roots of ritualism as defended by *Mimāṃsā*). Nevertheless, the fact that, in *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* and elsewhere, the operation of karma has been subsumed under the head of an unseen force (*adṛṣṭa*) indicates some of the difficulty there has been in conceiving its mechanism. But, given, the truth of rebirth, for which

²⁰ *Śivajñānabodham*, II. v. 13; cp: V. Paranjoti, *Saiva Siddhānta* (2nd edn. revised, 1954), p. 38.

²¹ See further below.

²² Paranjoti, *ibid.*

²³ Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 259.

²⁴ Dasgupta *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 152.

²⁵ Hiriyanna, *Popular Essays*, p. 47.

independent arguments were advanced, it has not been felt implausible to consider karma as a (happy ethical) law of nature.

We now come to arguments which are more general, i.e. they do not too closely depend upon features of particular *viewpoints nor upon any specific religious assumption. The most important of these is a version of the Teleological Argument, and it occasioned a comprehensive critique by Rāmānuja.²⁶ The argument is stated in Udayana's *Kusumāñjali*²⁷ and elsewhere.²⁸ The cosmos is of the nature of an effect (*kārya*), being made up of parts; thus, having an analogy to artifacts, it requires an intelligent author. A secondary argument is that the cosmos has an analogy to a complex organic body, whose functioning is dependent upon an intelligent principle. Rāmānuja criticizes these points on an umber of grounds, the chief of which are as follows. (1) Experience shows that pots, etc., are produced by intelligent agents; but as the material causes of the earth, oceans, etc., are not known, and as we have not observed their being produced, we have no right to infer an intelligent agent. (2) The existence of a body made up of a complex of parts only requires the combination of those parts in a specially intimate relation. (3) In any event, intelligence is not the only condition of the continued existence of an organic body. (4) There is no strong analogy between organic bodies and nature : e. g. animated bodies characteristically have the property of breathing, but this is not true of the earth, sea, mountains, etc. (5) Even if the argument were valid, there is no reason why the world should not have been produced by more than one agent, e. g. by finite *selves. Though it can be objected that such *selves are ignorant of the material causes, etc., required for the production of the world, yet craftsmen are quite capable of performing their work without a full insight into the nature of their materials. (6) Is the cosmos supposed to have been produced all at one time, or in succession ? The former supposition is unwarranted, since we have no evidence that the cosmos was created at one time, the second supposition would support the wrong conclusion—for experience shows that effects produced at different times are produced by different agents. (7) We only have experience of inferring a finite agent from certain kinds of artifacts : but no experience upon which to base an inference to an omniscient, omnipotent Spirit. Thus we could only legitimately infer a finite *self, and this conflicts with the definition of God. (8) Finite agents operate through their bodies; but if we ascribe a body to the *Lord we are allowing that something made up of parts can be eternal; but in this case the cosmos can be so regarded and there is no need to infer a Creator. But if God is bodiless, this destroys the basis of the inference, since we only experience effects produced by embodied agents. (9) The stronger the argument, the greater the

²⁶ On *Brahma Sūtra*, I. i. 3.

²⁷ v. 1.

²⁸ Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 152.

supposed similarity between finite beings and God; but God is infinitely good, possessing all excellences, and it is thus repugnant to religious feeling that God should be compared with the imperfect beings of this world.

Rāmānuja also notes certain counter-objections to these arguments: e. g. that there is nothing intrinsically impossible in the production of an effect by a pure volition; and thus God bodilessly could create the cosmos. Again, though the cosmos is greater in scale than pots, etc., objection to teleological inferences on this ground would rule out, e. g., the inference of a person who for the first time sees a palace that this is the work of an intelligent agent.

The Teleological Argument is also found in the Śaiva Siddhānta: the world as a single complex whole requires one mind to focus the work towards a unified product²⁹. Finite souls and matter are inadequate for this task (we may note that, as with the karma argument, disembodied *selves are regarded as causally inert). Madhva provided another variant,³⁰ viz. that the orderly interrelation of *selves in the world requires a *Lord as coordinator, since if any one *self had control over the others, others would have this power also, and the result would be chaos.

We have already discussed the atomic argument of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, which depends upon a particular view of number and quanta. But there is a more general argument from movement, namely that the paradigm case of causation is volitional—e. g. when I raise my arm. Consequently, movement in general needs to be interpreted in the light of this model. Now, *atoms, being material entities, are in themselves inert. Hence, their combination, after a period of *pralaya*, or cosmic destruction, can only be explained by reference to an intelligence. But as with the former argument, finite *selves as agents require bodies, and these are complexes of *atoms. Hence the initial combinations of *atoms presuppose God's existence.³¹ However the Vaiśeṣika of the early period was not theistic, and such concepts as gravity, to explain the falling of objects, *adṛṣṭa* as an unseen force governing the circulation of fluids in plants, etc., indicated that no intrinsic difficulty was felt in assigning motion to inanimate objects quite independently of volitions, and this forms the substance of the Mīmāṃsaka reply to the argument.³²

The sharp antithesis between soul and body, or more accurately between *self and psychophysical organism, in so much of traditional Indian thought provided an argument which might seem paradoxically opposed to that above. The Śaiva Siddhānta argued that God is required to ex-

²⁹ *Sivaprakāśam*, v. 16; cp. Paranjoti, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 ff.

³⁰ On *Brahma-Sūtra*, 1, ii. 17; cp. B. N. K. Sharma, *Madhva's Teachings in his own Words* (1961), p. 30.

³¹ M. Hiriyanna, *Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (1951), p. 92; cp. *Kusumāñjali*, v. 1, etc.

³² Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 152.

plain the bringing together of *selves and organisms. The *self is incapable of action without a body, and so cannot clothe itself, as it were, in a body.³³ But it must be remembered that the real distinction comes between *self and organism, not between mind and body : that is, volitional activity is a phenomenon of the material world and so can more easily serve as a paradigm of other kinds of material causation. But this puts the difficulty in another place; and it is therefore a stock reply to these theistic arguments that the *Lord cannot be effective unless he is embodied, and then the inference ought to be repeated to account for his body, and so on *ad infinitum*.³⁴

We have already adverted briefly to a Yoga argument. Two others are of interest. *Yoga-bhāṣya* i. 24 has sometimes been seen as reminiscent of the Ontological Argument,³⁵ namely “God’s preeminence is altogether without anything equal to it or excelling it. For...it cannot be excelled by any other preeminence, since whatever might seem to excel it would itself prove to be that very preeminence. Therefore that is the *Īśvara* wherein we reach this uppermost limit of preeminence.” Further, two equals are impossible, for when they simultaneously desire the same thing, one will necessarily be frustrated and thus is inferior. However, all this differs from the classical Ontological Argument in a number of ways : chiefly because it is an argument to show that the most perfect being is God, and is unique; and because existence as such is not treated as a perfection. The other interesting argument is more conclusive, since it does not merely attempt to show that the most perfect being is God but that this being is omniscient. It is argued that there are grades of knowledge and there must be a perfect limit to the series, viz. omniscience, and this must belong to a distinct soul, namely the *Lord.³⁶ However, *Mīmāṃsā* found difficulty in this concept. Ordinary preception could not give the *Lord knowledge of all things past and present, etc.; thus some suprasensible mode of knowledge must be employed. But if this is possible for a *self, what is the use of the senses³⁷?

There are a few further counter arguments to theistic belief used in Indian traditional thought. Notably, the problem of evil weighed heavily with the Buddha³⁸ and others³⁹. Again, there was difficulty in conceiving God’s motive in creating, as he is totally self-sufficient and perfect⁴⁰. Again, if the existence of the world requires a Creator, the existence of a Creator requires a meta-Creator and so on. But if you can stop at any stage, why not stop at the first, and affirm that the cosmos is uncreated?⁴¹

³³ Paranjoti, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

³⁴ Cp. the argument used by Rāmānuja on *Brahma Sūtra*, I. i. 3.

³⁵ S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (revised edn., 1929), vol. ii, p. 369.

³⁶ *Yoga Bhāṣya*, i. 25.

³⁷ Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 152.

³⁸ Cp. the comments of S. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 454 f.

³⁹ Hiriyanna, *Essentials*, p. 134.

⁴⁰ Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, vol. iii. p. 152.

⁴¹ See also above n. 34.

Finally, the theistic arguments raised questions about the nature of inference. Early Indian materialism rejected inference, and in particular inductive inference, on the ground that a generalization would always be liable to perceptual falsification. Even if one could observe all positive instances of a concomitance, furthermore, it would be impossible to observe all negative instances, i. e. the invariable concomitance of non-A with non-B⁴². However, Purandara⁴³ (7th Century A. D.) allowed inference from what is perceptible to what is perceptible, but not—and here we can see one of the main Cārvāka motives for questioning the validity of inference—inferences to the imperceptible, which orthodox theologians used to establish truths about the transcendent realm. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika gave such analogical inference the name of *sāmānyato-dṛṣṭa* it was of course a necessary form of reasoning if atomism were to be supported by argument. Likewise, Sāṅkhya had to use this type of inference to establish the existence of a creative and underlying *nature and eternal souls. But the disallowing of analogical inference to the unobservable imposed too drastic a limitation on physical speculations, and so the Cārvākas were in the position of banning both proto-science and theology, and it was ironic that they should have had as allies who were likewise sceptical about analogical inference the highly conservative Mimāṃsakas.⁴⁴

Such then were the main issues and arguments⁴⁵ clustering round the theistic proofs in the Indian tradition. The fact that different *viewpoints and systems of religious belief lived together from a very early period meant that there was plenty of opportunity for debate about disagreements. This accounts for the fact that there is more discussion of the existence of God, about which the schools disagreed, than about karma and rebirth, about which they virtually all agreed. However, it became fairly clear that arguments for God's existence could at best be a subsidiary means of persuasion, as Madhva held. Of greater importance has been the appeal to, and interpretation of, religious experience. This is central to modern Hindu and Buddhist arguments and apologetic⁴⁶.

⁴² Riepe, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁴³ *ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁴⁴ Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

⁴⁵ Naturally, a fair number of minor points have been omitted: e. g., Udayana's arguments (*Kusumāñjali*, v. i) that traditional arts, such as weaving, presuppose an intelligent author, because none knows of their human authorship, and that the world requires support, or it would fall. Such arguments are, obviously nugatory in the light of modern knowledge.

⁴⁶ See, e. g., S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra* (1960), p. 243.

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ONE OF THE convenient aspects of the Indian, or more generally South Asian, philosophical tradition is that it is typically organized into systems. These are, of course, often referred to as the *darśanas*. But it is important here for us not to be misled by some older and some more modern classifications—to which point I shall return in a moment. The systematic character of South Asian viewpoints gives us a clear view of the way that key terms are embedded in contexts. As so embedded the terms acquire systematic ambiguity. Consider that so prominent and widely emphasized expression, *mokṣa*, and its cognates and surrogates, *mukti*, Nirvana, *kevala*, and so on. It is an obvious point that the term means different things according to the variety of contexts in which it is used. Consider for instance the role played here by the concept of heavenly existence. Only in some cases does rebirth in heaven count as liberation: thus it is the longed-for goal of Viśiṣṭādvaita and is the aim of Mīmāṃsā; but it is not final salvation described in the Theravāda or Advaita, or for that matter in Sāṃkhya or Jainism. These examples make us ask what, if anything clear, counts as a transcendent state of being in the Indian tradition, seeing that *mokṣa* can be tied both to heavenly (that is, subtle spatial) existence and to transpatial existence. The examples also lead us to question how we can compare *mokṣa* to the rather different ideas (it seems) in the western tradition. To complicate matters, India also distinguished between final *mukti* and *jīvanmukti* or living liberation, as in the Yoga and Buddhist traditions.

Certain morals, which I want to sketch out in greater detail, already emerge from these brief remarks. They can be stated

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as follows. First of all, the Indian philosophical tradition contains among other things a stock of key terms that have systematic ambiguity insofar as they appear embedded in differing systems. By and large these key terms are shared between *āstika* and *nāstika* schools alike, though some regional belief-systems may have an idiosyncratic stock of key expressions—for example Śaiva Siddhānta.

Second, despite the variations according to systematic context, there emerge from the tradition broad patterns that indicate ways in which the tradition differs from that in the West: so there is a double ambiguity in our translations and modes of grasping Indian ideas (“we” here means westerners: I write as a westerner approaching India cross-culturally).

Lastly, the notion of “living liberation” reminds us that there are experimental and behavioral and indeed institutional ways in which the systems themselves not only embedded key concepts but in their turn are embedded in life. If being embedded in a system can be called horizontal contextuality, being embedded in a form of life can be called vertical contextuality. In particular the major systems, with two possible exceptions, make no sense unless we take seriously their embedment in religious and spiritual practice. Although some writers, in part under the influence of modern western ideas about the autonomy of philosophy, are hesitant or hostile about the claim that Indian philosophy is rooted for the most part in religion, it seems to me reasonable to note the close relations. Indeed, as there is no word that univocally corresponds to ‘philosophy’, it is important to think about the underlying reasons for this state of affairs. There is no lack of analytic insight in the Indian tradition, and religion is more rationally presented in many ways than it has been in the West: so the issue is not about intellectual credentials. It is just that we must be realistic about the ambience, the vertical context, of Indian reflection.

Moreover, I think it would be inept for us to start with the imperial assumption that somehow there is a clearly and well-defined place in our intellectual firmament for what is called

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philosophy. It seems to me that modern western philosophy has been the product of a number of cultural accidents, one of which is institutionalization of universities into a departmental structure. Another is the retrospective adoption of a canonical list of philosophers (and sometimes important thinkers have been on the whole ignored in the canon at certain periods: for example, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche). Such retrospection involves projecting into the past the perceived important themes of present vogues and trends. It is worth noting that modern conceptions of Indian philosophy are the product of a synthesis of western and Indian thinking in the period since the second half of the nineteenth century. In certain ways modern ideas of Indian philosophy do not fit with elements in the tradition itself—that is, the South Asian tradition dominated primarily by emerging Buddhist and Hindu religious and social structures and world views. Let me sketch briefly some of the problems about talking about “Indian philosophy” at all.

First, in premodern times there was a complex civilization in the Indian subcontinent in which various world views were held and practiced, ranging from the six official *darśanas* of the *āstika* variety through to the various and multiplying world views or schools of thought through which Buddhism was expressed, via Jainism, the Ājīvikas, materialism, and other unorthodox positions. And this is not to mention emerging regional viewpoints such as Kashmiri Śavisim, Śaiva Siddhānta, the Lingāyatās, and so on. Modern histories of Indian philosophy tend to stick to the six official *āstika* schools plus some reference to the principal *nāstika* schools. The perspective is very much the projection of modern Indian (predominantly Hindu) self-awareness onto a much more chaotic past. The six *darśanas* are not exhaustive or logically arranged, and though they all have some philosophical or ratiocinative interest, they differ radically in scope, from the strange hermeneutical world view of Mīmāṃsā to the logical slant of Nyāya and the protoscientific shape of Vaiśeṣika. Moreover, the most important philosophical division within the *āstika* tradition, found in the varieties of Vedānta, are lumped together under a

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single head. And the very concept of *āstika* does not comprehensively cover the Hindu tradition itself: it is a Brahmin classification, and so otherwise fascinating and ingeniously worked out theologies, such as that of Śaiva Siddhānta, are left on one side.

The explanation of all this messy lack of fit with some unitary view of philosophy from a western perspective has, of course, to do with the vertical context. The way knowledge is classified in the Indian tradition has to do with social and spiritual attitudes and behavior. Thus the fact that the idea of *āstika* figures so prominently in classifications of philosophical systems reflects a social fabric in which only upper-class Hindus had access to Brahmin administered knowledge.

Moreover, the *āstikaness* of the *darśanas* actually varies widely. Sāṃkhya owes little in fact to the Vedas, and Sāṃkhya ideas where they occur in later scriptures have a different horizontal context from that in which they find themselves in systematic Sāṃkhya. Mīmāṃsā is rather flagrant in its repudiation of much in the Upaniṣads and of the whole concept of the Lord. Frankly, the classification *āstika* versus *nāstika* is rather misleading. Its main interest is that it was taken seriously for some purposes: and those purposes philosophically involved mainly the special role of the *pramāṇa* of *śabda*. Incidentally, if one wanted a rough equivalent of most English-speaking philosophy of today it would be *pramāṇavidyā*—the science of the sources of knowledge.

Also incidentally: if the categorization of Indian philosophy is traditionally a bit of a mess, so is it in western philosophy: putting Aquinas, Thales, Pico della Mirandola, Nietzsche, A. J. Ayer, Wittgenstein, Russell, Heidegger, Schopenhauer, Kant, and Habermas in the same basket is bound to cause trouble.

I have said that the *darśana* categorization owes itself to social and spiritual facts: its chaos in part reflects too the anarchic nature of the evolution of the so-called Hindu tradition. Hinduism is a rather recent invention; but for a new religion it has remarkably ancient roots. It is a matter of creating the con-

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sciousness of synthesis, and in this regard the proponents of the modern Hindu ideology turned out to be remarkably eloquent spokespeople. We are now held in the grip of this vision of a tradition flowering pluralistically but in its own way coherently, from the *Rg Veda* through to the great Vedantins and beyond. But I ask: What was Hinduism before the *Gītā*? Or before temples? Or before Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja? Were the typical features of the Hindu tradition present in nuce in the Vedas: reincarnation, Śiva, Viṣṇu, the *smārtas*, caste, images, bathing tanks, pilgrimages, the *Manu-smṛti*, the bathing ghats along the Ganges, the various practices of Yoga, the cat and monkey schools? Of course not: but as in other religions hermeneutics did its best to turn scraps and ambiguities into scriptural proofs. I do not want to be thought to be undervaluing the modern Hindu synthesis of such men as Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan. It was a creative and noble vision, and it did much both for the Indian national struggle, a new Hindu self-awareness, and tolerant and pluralistic attitudes.

Actually, this modern Hindu ideology is itself a forecast of what one aspect of comparative philosophy is likely to yield—namely, a reflective synthesis of the outlooks of differing past civilizations, in the interests of a new global reflection on the history of the human race. The ideology may also remind us that the past is precious, because it can act as a treasure house of resources for us in our thinking through present and future problems.

I have remarked that we need to look to the vertical contexts of the various schools; and the general vertical context was predominantly religious; but those who wish to emphasize the secular features of ancient and medieval India are of course entitled to do so. The *Lokāyata* for example was a long and rich tradition of thinking, and many critical styles of thinking in any event entered into the more religious paths. To select among these aspects of the past is one mode of resource selectivity. Maybe, though, it would be more realistic and comprehensive to take one strand of Indian thinking about the tradition and generalize it. The term *darśana* can be appropriately

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enough translated viewpoint or “world view” in English. Generally speaking, what we mean by Indian philosophy is the process and results of various attempts to articulate and argue for world views—ranging from Rāmānuja’s devotional theism to forms of materialism. Logic and linguistics were brought in as technical adjuncts to such world-view construction or world view articulation, though they can have an independent existence (as today: separate programs of linguistics and logic in our universities are a sign of the independence of these disciplines, which have been raised in part by their adoptive parents in philosophy). So if we wanted a way of characterizing Indian philosophy in general it would be as world-view articulation. And, by the way, what would be wrong with that characterization for western and other kinds of philosophy? At one time many philosophers dreaded the thought that metaphysics might be the scope of philosophy: but they still held to some form of (antimetaphysical) world view, so even they might have been satisfied. Moreover, this formula covers more than philosophy as often narrowly institutionalized: it would cover theologies (and rightly so, for are they not in competition with other world views?) and political ideologies such as Marxism. It would be educationally logical to group together the exploration of alternative world views, both historically and evaluatively. Philosophy, parts of politics, history, religious studies, and so on would coalesce into a *darśanavidyā*.

Such a *darśanavidyā* is in part analytic and in part argumentative. By analytic I mean that practitioners try to understand rather than defend or attack world views. It is directed to description instead of construing a better articulation or creating arguments for a position. Religious studies as historical, sociological, and phenomenological inquiry is world-view analysis and, if stretched to cover nonreligious ideologies, would comprehend the descriptive aspect of the total field. Similarly we can think of comparative *darśanavidyā* as having an analytic side and a constructive side. This essay began with some analytic problems: the need to see the ambiguity of key terms in Indian *darśanas* because of their horizontal contextuality. When

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we come to cross-cultural *darśanavidyā* the systematic ambiguity becomes stretched: salvation or liberation includes the varieties of *mokṣa* plus much more. Can such ambiguity, such analogy of meanings, be turned to our advantage?

From what standpoint? I think that the analysis is important in the present *philosophical* context because it can suggest new ways of thinking: it calls into question some of the forms of thought with which we may approach the world. Let me list a few cases in which the Indian tradition displays an analogy of meaning that stimulates new reflection from a western standpoint.

First, there is the strangely (that is, from a western viewpoint) conceived distinction between *prakṛti* (materiality) and *puruṣa* (consciousness): strangely conceived in that what we might classify as mental—such as *buddhi* and *manas*, and the like—here falls under the heading of matter. Similarly in the case of Buddhism the description of human psychology does not include a self, for it all falls, so to say, on the hither side—on the side of impermanence. So the soul–body distinction is drawn differently. Second, the very act of thinking that India typically draws the line between soul and matter in a different place causes us to question whether matter or even nature is in any way a proper translation of *prakṛti*, especially *prakṛti* as conceived in the Sāṃkhya system. If it has an inherent teleology, is it not a very different conception from our (currently dissolving) concept of matter? Third, and connectedly, the Buddhist nonself doctrine, which might at first sight seem puzzling, becomes intelligible when we see that Buddhism among other things aims to delineate a world composed of events (*dharmas*). But the consequence is a quite new view of transcendence, which is like “this world” desubstantialized. The various notions, incidentally, of *loka* or universe and the various concepts of the ultimate stimulate a quite new debate in regard to what is meant by “transcendence.” Fourth, the Indian *pramāṇavidyā* has something surprising from a western point of view: the inclusion of testimony. Much depends on this, for on it turns the whole question of the acceptability of

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śruti (scriptural authority). This raises some important questions in the philosophy of religion, but at the same time obliquely raises an issue about the communal character of knowledge. These, then, are a few ways in which the manner of carving the joints of the world differs in the Indian and western milieus.

If we look on the various philosophical heritages as resources, then we may hope that ideas drawn from them might help to resolve some of the major world-view problems of the new intellectual world taking shape through the meeting of cultures. I have mentioned ways in which the Indian heritage, by its very carving of the categories, may act as a stimulus to western thinking. Let me try out some ideas in the opposite direction.

A pervasive feature of much of Indian thinking is the distinguishing of differing levels of truth: we find it of course in classical Mādhyamika and in Vasubandhu and Śaṅkara. If one looks to the vertical context, it is evident that the pursuit of the contemplative path to a “higher” kind of consciousness is crucial. The experience of *nirguna brahman* makes sense of the two-level theory: in the light of the nondual consciousness the ordinary world is indeed like a dream. This echoes a concern rather differently expressed in the West: namely, a way of thinking of differing modes of experiencing reality, either by religious experience or through ordinary perception, scientific investigation, and so on. In different ways this synthetic way of combining religious and nonreligious apprehensions can be seen in Otto, Buber, Stace, Hick, and Capra. Can the Indian scheme then be picked up and placed in a different context, where it is not a matter of higher or lower, but rather of alternative modes of experiencing? Again: can the notion of *śabda* (verbal authority) be put in a new context, namely of communication? For the process of scientific knowledge is a community exercise in which concepts of falsification, verification, testing hypotheses, degrees of confirmation, and so forth all presuppose a community of communicators. This presupposition may take us away from the solitarian preoccupations

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of so much western epistemology: Descartes in solitary doubt, Russell squinting at elliptical pennies by himself, and so on.

It also raises some questions about the teacher: do we pay any credence to the claim that some people have a higher religious insight in which we simply “have to take their word” for it? The appeal to *śabda* brings into sharper focus a major issue in global world-view construction: the issue whether anyone is entitled to appeal to transcendental testimony. Some of the major traditional religions rest on revelations, and a major question is whether eventually such revelations themselves do not rest upon experience. If so, then the central issue of a transcendent-oriented world view is whether we are justified in claiming at all that some experiences can give insight into what lies beyond. And in what sense of beyond? For one thing, if we maintain the Kantian distinction between a noumenal reality and the phenomenal world presented by it, how does this distinction relate to the parallel but quite different distinction between the nondual and duality-drenched realms of experience and truth? There is the strange, but persuasive, thought that there is something noumenal behind the nondual experience, which suggests a tripartite God: the noumenal *X*, the nondual Brahman, and the duality-drenched Creator.

These thoughts are mere hints about ways in which a religious philosophy may be excogitated combining both Indian and western resources. In an important sense this type of speculation is not comparative philosophy but cross-cultural world-view construction. Unless of course that is what comparative philosophy really is.

In the process, key terms will take on new meanings. Although it is vital that we recognize the contextuality, both horizontal and vertical, of key terms, we can note too that by suggestively transplanting some of them into the new context of the interactive global situation we are helping to impart to them a new dynamism. If systems can argue with one another sensibly within the Indian tradition, despite the perils of systematic ambiguity, it is possible for them to do so creatively in a cross-cultural context.

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In summary, the *darśanavidyā* that I propose has differing levels and compartments. One compartment is the study of Indian philosophy as such. Descriptive or analytic *darśanavidyā* describes the systems and movements of thought in context and helps to elucidate both the inner horizontal dynamic and the vertical contextual correlates of systems. At another level *darśanavidyā* is decompartmentalized, because it is global in character. We are now in a period of cross-cultural interaction on a total global scale. If we sometimes forget this it is partly because western philosophy itself remains rather compartmentalized. In the global context we can practice a new kind of *pramānavidyā*, that is, examining the consequences of alternative world views and the way they regard each other. It may also prove irresistible beyond this stage to indulge in more than analytical global *darśanavidyā*: in a word, *sarvadarśanavidyā*. There may be the call to begin to fashion world views that arise from the situation of today and the suggestive resources from various cultures now at our disposal. And now who would *we* be? No longer adherents of one tradition, but human intellectuals in a pregnant sense: belonging to the new para-tribe, Humanity.

CHAPTER 6

Swami Vivekananda as a Philosopher

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In what sense was Swami Vivekananda a philosopher? It is necessary to ask the question, because so many different meanings have been attached to the word 'philosophy'. This problem has an added complication when we are dealing with one who was so gifted and eloquent a preacher to both East and West. For in some measure Indian and European concepts of the aim and nature of philosophy diverge. By and large, the Indian tradition conceives philosophy as being in close relation to religion and the pursuit of spiritual release. On the other hand, in Europe – and especially at the present day – much philosophizing is done in total disregard of religion. Moreover, the *darshanas* or viewpoints of traditional Indian philosophy present metaphysical delineations of reality; while much recent philosophy in the English-speaking world is sceptical of the possibility of metaphysics as it has been conceived hitherto. It is therefore useful, for the sake of clarity, to make some distinctions. In so far as people discuss epistemological, logical or related problems without having the aim of working out some general conclusions about the nature of reality, we can say that they are engaged in 'technical philosophy'. The philosophy of science, for example, is generally pursued today in this manner: the aim is to illuminate the methods of scientific enquiry, etc.¹ Secondly, we [65] have doctrines about the world, which may or may not be arrived at by metaphysical reflection. For instance, if they are religious in character they will tend to come, initially at least, through some revelation or authoritative teaching. Such systems of teachings (often in conflict with one another) we can refer to as 'doctrinal schemes'.² When it is said 'One ought to have a philosophy of life', what is generally meant is that a person should have some coherent doctrinal scheme which delineates reality and guides his outlook on life. In so far as a person thinks out, or reflectively defends, such a doctrinal scheme, he can be said to engage in 'metaphysical thinking'. Given these distinctions, the answer to our initial question is pretty clear. Swami Vivekananda was not primarily interested in what we have called technical philosophy; rather he was concerned to expound and to defend a doctrinal scheme, a certain view of reality. Much of what he said raises issues which are peculiarly relevant at the present time.

The first of these is one which even now has not sufficiently impinged on the religious consciousness of the Western world. Partly as a consequence of certain embarrassing

¹ See, for instance, S. Toulmin, *Philosophy of Science*.

² See my *Reasons and Faiths*, Introduction.

conflicts between science and theology, it has, in the last forty years, been fashionable for Protestant theologians to base their teachings essentially and virtually exclusively upon revelation (whether this be conceived as what is contained in scripture, or as the events recorded in the scriptures which manifest God's saving activity, or as personal experience of Christ, etc.). Yet however sophisticated such an appeal may be, it neglects the vital and puzzling fact that there are, in the great traditions of different cultures, [66] divergent revelations and differing scriptures. If the various religions represent different doctrinal schemes, each claiming to be true, by what criteria should we decide which is true? As Swami Vivekananda writes; 'How is this to be decided? Certainly not by the books, because the books fighting between themselves cannot be the judges. Decidedly then we have to admit that there is ... something which can judge between the strength of inspirations of different nations. Whether we declare it boldly, clearly, or not – it is evident that here we appeal to reason.'³

In a general sense, this is clearly true. Any faith that claims an exclusive perception of the truth must have something to say about other faiths. Now it is easy enough, in one way, to pigeon-hole other faiths from one's own point of view. It is easy enough to measure other religions by the yardstick of one's own belief – to say 'That faith is right in saying this, wrong in affirming that'. It is indeed all too simple for dogmatists of all faiths to adopt this procedure, and to think that this settles matters. But of course if the other man uses the same method with *your* faith, there is an impasse. It follows that the notion of religious truth pre-supposes some criteria which are 'neutral' as between different doctrinal schemes. This in turn means two things: first, that each religion must treat its 'rivals' with respect; and second that there must be in some measure a common area where discussion can occur. It was one reason for Swami Vivekananda's amazing impact upon the Parliament of Religions that he voiced with such clarity not only a view of religions which enhances their mutual respect, but also an expression [67] of the characteristically Hindu concept of the unity-in-diversity of all the great faiths.

However – and here we come to a second issue of contemporary importance – Swami Vivekananda did not merely wish to say that the problem of religious truth implied an appeal to reason in the general sense that reasons for the acceptance of a doctrinal scheme must be given when there are seen to be rival revelations and scriptures and traditions. He did not just wish to draw attention to the logic of the world's religious predicament. He also wished to enunciate some reasonable principles by which to judge religion. In his lecture 'Reason and Religion', which we have already quoted, and which, appropriately enough, was delivered in England (where reasonableness is, one likes to think, counted as a virtue), he enunciates two such principles.⁴ First, that explanation must proceed from the less general to the more general; and second, that explanation must come, so to speak, from inside and not from outside. His application of this second principle is what immediately concerns us here, for it ties in closely with some present-day issues among Western theologians. Just as, he holds, explanations of particular events, such as the falling of a stone, in terms of the activity of supernatural beings (demons and the

³ Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, pp. 368–9.

⁴ Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, pp. 369–72.

like), break down – or rather are found to be superfluous when the Newtonian concept of gravitation is introduced – so also the final move of supernaturalist theology, the explanation of the existence of the cosmos through the activity of a Creator, is useless. He writes: ‘It is unnecessary to seek for a cause outside. This also is breaking down religion. What I mean by breaking [68] down religion is that religions that have held on to the idea of an extra-cosmic deity, that he is a very big man and nothing else, can no more stand on their feet; they have been pulled down as it were.’⁵

Swami Vivekananda’s second principle chimes in with the monistic urge expressed in some recent philosophy, in particular with the view recently argued by John Passmore. By monism here is meant the thesis that there is, at bottom, only one *sort* of entity (not that there is only one entity, as in Absolute Idealism); and from this point of view, the concept of a supernatural being is repugnant, since it involves a radical distinction between ordinary beings and God. However, this version of monism, though it may have some cogent reasons on its side, is not quite in accord with the procedures of linguistic analysis, which itself is in a way a descendant of logical positivism and thus shares a common ancestry with Passmore and other empiricists. For, influenced by Wittgenstein’s later writings, British philosophy has been somewhat inclined to distinguish between the different functions and flavours of different uses of language, including religious language. Thus, from the standpoint of linguistic analysis, it has been relatively easy to hold that there are, if not different sorts of entity, at least different ways of speaking; and this opens the path to distinguishing between talk of God on the one hand and talk of mundane beings on the other. That is, linguistic analysis tends to be anti-monistic. Similar remarks can be made about Existentialism. Moreover, monism in this sense can be taken two ways: in Swami Vivekananda’s way, which implies that all things in essence are divine; or in the [69] materialist’s way, which implies that all things are combinations of material entities.

No, it is in a different manner, in its religious connotation, that Swami Vivekananda’s second principle has results which are highly relevant today. Recently in England there has been a striking example of the popularization of theological ideas. John Robinson’s *Honest to God* has not only been a best-seller; but it has been a best-seller with footnotes. In this way the public has been introduced to certain leading theological writings of contemporary Christendom – notably those of Paul Tillich and the late Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In differing ways both these writers echo (unwittingly and independently, one supposes) the message of Swami Vivekananda as partially expressed in the above quotation. Tillich rejects supranaturalism – the intervention of a Deity external to nature (in this way, he writes in accord with Swami Vivekananda’s first principle: Tillich speaks of Being, the Swami of Existence, referring to the Indian concept of Brahman as *sat*) – Existence being the most general concept we can use of things. Bonhoeffer looks to the possibility of a ‘religionless’ Christianity, and thus acknowledges the breakdown to which Swami Vivekananda refers. This breakdown is, of course, largely a Western phenomenon; though it should be noted that whereas Hinduism is permeated with a supranaturalist religion at the popular level, this has long been tamed, in one sense, by the doctrine of

⁵ *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I, p. 372.

different levels of truth – whereas in the West, and notably in the Protestant West, it has been thought vitally important to have a common level of religion for everybody (in this respect, the Swami's teaching about unity-in-diversity, in so far as the accent [70] may be placed upon *diversity*, has not been sown on fertile ground).

When Swami Vivekananda refers to the idea of the extra-cosmic deity who is a 'very big man', he foreshadows Robinson's attack upon the popular 'image' of God as 'out there'; and it is easy to see that Robinson's and Tillich's reference to the *depths* of being are capable of an interpretation much in accord with certain traditional Hindu ideas, especially those of Advaitism. Thus we can observe that some Christian theology is moving closer to the ideas enunciated by Swami Vivekananda. One imagines that one reason for this is the increasing preoccupation with psychology in the West during the last sixty or so years. This must generate the suspicion that the picture of God entertained by both theologians and lay folk owes something to the psychology of the individual: and therefore the Christian is more amenable than hitherto to the Indian insistence upon the necessity for seeing religion not only in psychological terms, but also as well or badly adapted to the recipient of teachings. In this respect too Swami Vivekananda's repeated endeavour to show that religious ideas must be flexible, to chime in with the insights of different cultures and traditions, is more likely to receive acceptance today than heretofore. This, however, raises issues which are as yet unresolved (or at least are unresolved in terms of mutual agreement between the expositors of different faiths) – principally the issue whether such psychological pragmatism about the way religion is taught and practised implies that underlying the different faiths there is a single perennial philosophy or doctrinal scheme. If there is, Hinduism has a good claim to [71] express the heart of the matter: for undoubtedly among world faiths it is the most embracing. On the other hand, it is clearly true that the Vedanta, even in its Advaitic form, is not itself in accord with the explicit teachings of other religions. It is therefore important to recognize that the universalist message of Swami Vivekananda, and of his master Ramakrishna, genuinely represents a new departure in world religions – the attempt to make the highest form of Hinduism a world faith. In so doing, the Vedanta would cease to be the highest form of Hinduism as such: but it would become the highest form of religion in general. Whether or not this faith will emerge as the unifying factor in the global manifestation of religion is something which will be settled by a process of social dialogue. But it must expect to have rivals from the less synthetically-minded faiths, and probably most of all from Christianity, which combines a strong measure of the exclusiveness characterizing the other Semitic religions, Judaism and Islam, with a degree of self-criticism and openness to scientific enquiry which is largely lacking in these other faiths.

The exclusiveness of the Semitic religions is partly due to their view of God: it is also due to their view of man. Either immortality is neglected, as in early Judaism, or it is conceived in rather materialistic terms (indeed the Christian idea of the resurrection of the body represents an apotheosis of the material creation). It is true that, partly under the influence of Greek philosophy, there has been a strong tendency to think of an eternal otherwordly life. But whatever the theory or doctrine, it has remained clear, throughout the Western tradition since Christianity permeated [72] classical civilization in the

Mediterranean area, that this life of ours on earth is our only earthly life. In brief, the West has not believed much in reincarnation. By consequence, salvation becomes a much more urgent matter, to be achieved, if at all, rapidly. Thus there is no room in the Christian and other Semitic traditions for the concept of the gradual evolution of the person, through successive rebirths, towards liberation. This may account for the explosive evangelism of Christianity compared with the gentler and more permissive preaching of Hinduism and Buddhism. Naturally, one who was preaching to the West would need to face the issue of reincarnation: it cannot here be taken, as so often in India, for granted. It is of interest to note Swami Vivekananda's arguments on this score.

Some of these were directed to those already believing in God, and who might be perturbed by the problem of evil. From this religious point of view the undoubted attraction of the theory of rebirth is that at one stroke it accounts for human sufferings without implicating God and without introducing a Devil (who is now in any event fading rapidly from the religious imagination of Christendom). Also, the theory, by attributing my present ills to the effect of past deeds, lays the responsibility on me: it therefore, as Swami Vivekananda insisted, teaches self-reliance.⁶

Nevertheless, though the doctrine has such religious or theological advantages, these do not by themselves show that it is true. Swami Vivekananda therefore appealed to a number of considerations drawn partly from traditional Indian metaphysics⁷ (though it should [73] be noted that because virtually everyone among the different schools shared belief in rebirth, there was remarkably little argumentation about it). Swami Vivekananda chiefly used the argument from the existence of tendencies in new-born children and their capacity gradually to organize their experience. He drew an analogy between the skills and tendencies which in the first instance are the result of conscious effort and learning, but later become automatic, and the instinctive tendencies of children (for example, their fear of death). If the analogy holds, it is reasonable to hold that these tendencies were acquired in a prior conscious state, i.e. in a previous life. Further, the development of knowledge implies that the mind is not a *tabula rasa* at birth. He writes: 'Now we see that without a fund of already existing experience, any new experience would be impossible, for there would be nothing to which to refer the new impression. So if ... a child came into the world with what they call *tabula rasa*, such a child would never attain to any degree of intellectual power, because he would have nothing to which to refer his new experiences.'⁸ However, Swami Vivekananda had to meet a challenge of a modern kind, arising from discoveries in biology, which traditional Indian thought had not had to face. I refer to the Theory of Evolution, and the science of genetics. For these would appear to imply that the tendencies and capacities of children, etc., are due to hereditary transmission. Thus we derive our mental skills in part from experience, and in part from our ancestors, *via* our genes.

Swami Vivekananda was seriously concerned with [74] this challenge – so much so that he affirmed not only that the choice lies between reincarnation and cellular transmission,

⁶ Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, II, p. 224.

⁷ Ibid., IV, pp. 268–71.

⁸ Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, II, p. 220.

but also that this in turn means the choice between spiritualism and materialism. Thus, on his view, a great deal indeed turns on the question of whether we can inherit mental properties genetically. He writes: 'If cellular transmission is the all-sufficient explanation, materialism is inevitable, and there is no necessity for the theory of a soul.'⁹

It may be remarked in passing that a related challenge faces Christian doctrine. The Theory of Evolution already casts doubt on the doctrine of the special creation of man (in this respect there is a drawing closer to the Eastern sense of the solidarity between man and other living beings). Nor is it attractive to postulate the continuous intervention of a supernatural being in grafting souls upon human embryos. Swami Vivekananda was indeed rather scathing about such a doctrine.¹⁰ From the Christian point of view, and bearing in mind the above considerations, it is clear that after all Swami Vivekananda was far nearer the truth than some traditional Christian theology when he wrote: 'God being the universal and common cause of all phenomena, the question was to find natural causes of certain phenomena in the human soul, and the *Deus ex machina* theory is, therefore, quite irrelevant.'¹¹ If reincarnation is not accepted, it implies that mental properties have emerged from a material background in the process of evolution, and that this is part of God's continuous creative activity in sustaining and evolving the material world.

[75] Yet of course there remains a considerable puzzle about the existence of conscious states: for although there seems to be evidence in modern biology and psychology of the inheritance of mental traits, and although too the functioning of the mind is closely tied up with the changes which occur in the brain, it remains a major philosophical problem to see how mind and consciousness arise out of, or are dependent on, material processes. The mind-body problem in this form is probably the main issue in contemporary philosophy; and thus Swami Vivekananda's critique of old-fashioned dualism in the Western context, together with his recognition of the importance of evolutionary theory, gives his discussion of reincarnation a continued relevance.

It may be remarked too that he interprets evolution in accordance with the Sankhya notion of causation, and with the concept of *parinama*. This implies that evolution is the unfolding of what is already implicit in its early stages.¹² It implies that (to go back to his second rational principle mentioned above) we explain the emergence of species, etc., from 'within'. In this, Swami Vivekananda adopts a view which in differing ways has been expressed both by Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin. For the latter, for example, puzzled by the same problem of the relation of consciousness to material phenomena, in effect ascribed to matter, even at the earliest stages of its development towards conscious life, an 'inner' side. In brief, a kind of rudimentary consciousness is already implicit in the material world. This contrasts with the theory of emergent characteristics in the evolutional process – the theory, [76] namely, that the novel and indeed unpredictable characteristics, e.g. those of mental life, have come into being in the course of evolution and human history.

⁹ *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, IV, p. 271.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 270.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 268.

¹² *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, II, pp. 425–6.

Since such metaphysical reflections on the part of Swami Vivekananda suberved the general aim of expounding a doctrinal scheme that could form the basis of a universal faith for both East and West, it is useful to turn to examine his views on the nature of religion: to examine, that is, his philosophy of religion. Quite clearly, any discussion of the relation between science and religion must involve a view of the *kind* of statements which religion affirms – statements which have a different function from those we meet with in scientific enquiry. In this connection, Swami Vivekananda analysed religion roughly into three components. He writes: 'First, there is the philosophy which presents the whole scope of that religion, setting forth its basic principles, the goal and the means of reaching it. The second part is mythology, which is philosophy made concrete. ... The third part is the ritual. This is still more concrete and is made up of forms and ceremonies, various physical attitudes, flowers and incense, and many other things, that appeal to the senses.'¹³ In brief, we can distinguish doctrines, myths and rituals. Swami Vivekananda further argued that the philosophical element was fundamental. True, the necessity for myths and symbols, for ritual or *karma-yoga*, remains: for in order to have a proper grasp of the inner meaning of doctrines it is necessary to grow spiritually. But these are, as it were, a bridge which takes you over to the further shore: and it is that further shore which constitutes the essence of the religious quest. This analysis of the components of religion is relevant to modern issues exercising Christian thinkers. For it has become increasingly obvious, as a result of the Biblical researches of the last hundred years or so, that many elements in the world-picture of the writers of the Christian scriptures are mythological. Such a mythology – of the 'three-decker universe', for example, or of the Fall of Adam – is for various reasons unacceptable today. If one cannot believe in the literal dimension of a myth its symbolic power fades. Consequently, it has become a project for the Christian – a project associated with the name of Rudolf Bultmann – to 'demythologize' the Christian message: to rid it of inappropriate or dead mythical elements, so that the doctrines of the faith can be represented in a form which will strike home to modern man. But this presents a psychological problem, to which Swami Vivekananda's remarks on the subject are most germane.

If it be the case, as he argued, that men require myth and ritual in order to make religious truths readily comprehensible and vivid, and to train them in the path of spiritual enlightenment, it remains a question as to how the Christian should view his own predicament, as expressed by Bultmann. If it be the case that certain elements in the traditional mythology of Christianity are no longer acceptable, what then will take their place? And can one also abandon the Biblical mythology while giving it such a prominent place in the daily ritual of the Church? It is probable that a certain philosophical self-awareness may guide us towards at least a partial solution of the problem: [78] and the analysis of religion given by Swami Vivekananda creates some degree of such self-awareness. For in the history of religion, as in other aspects of human life, it is clear that the understanding of a situation affects that situation. Consequently, the making of distinctions such as those between doctrine, myth and ritual already alters our attitudes within the religious situation. For the primitive man, who, as has been said, 'dances out his

¹³ Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, II, p. 377.

religion', mythology and ritual are so closely interwoven that questions about the relation between the two scarcely arise. At another level, where we have (for instance) a literalistic view of scriptures, whether Bible, Koran or Veda, there is hardly any distinction between metaphysical truths and the myths and histories. By recognizing such a distinction between doctrine and myth, one imports a new attitude into the situation; and myths may be retained provided they are recognized for what they are.

This itself presents an opportunity for mutual understanding between faiths. For if we follow Swami Vivekananda's analysis, and see in the doctrines the heart of the formal expression of the various faiths, we shall no longer be so put off by external differences. Moreover, at the level of metaphysical truth it is not so easy to draw hard and sharp distinctions between diverse formulations. Of course, differences do exist: but often they can be exaggerated by taking expressions too literally or superficially. For example, Ramanuja's description of the world and of souls as the body of God could at first sight look like pantheism: but when we consider that by 'body' was meant that which is subservient to, or instrument to, spirit, the illusion of pantheism is dissipated, and it becomes a moot question [79] as to what difference there is, if any, between Qualified Non-Dualism and the theism of Western natural theology. Then again, we have already referred to the recent attack on the notion of a God 'out there'. The phrase is a pictorial way of trying to visualize God's transcendence. But then if we get down to analysing what transcendence is, we soon find that the analogy of God's being 'beyond' the visible cosmos has much the same meaning as the analogy of God's being 'within' all things. For just as He is not many million light-years beyond our galaxy, so He is not literally discoverable *within* a flower or tree: by cutting them open you will not find Him. It is thus misleading to label the one view theism and the other pantheism (as some Christian theologians have tended to do).

However, these remarks themselves raise a question about the nature of religious statements. For if God be not literally within the flower in the way in which atoms, etc., are literally within it, this implies that religion and science are in some sense talking about different things. Does this mean that science has no relevance to religion? Swami Vivekananda's views on this issue were somewhat complex. On the one hand, as we have seen, he considered Evolutionary Theory and genetics as raising a challenge to belief in the soul and reincarnation. So in this context the pursuit of religious truth must take into account the particular deliverances of science. Furthermore, his repudiation of the miraculous¹⁴ is based upon the principles of causation, which could be regarded as an extrapolation from the methods and attitudes of scientific enquiry. In this case too science is relevant to the particularities of [80] religious belief. On the other hand, he makes a general distinction between the microcosm and the macrocosm which also helps to define the boundary between the physical sciences and psychology, religion and metaphysics. Thus physical science and religion have diverse spheres. Nevertheless, despite this division he writes: 'a perfect truth should be in harmony with experiences in both these worlds. The microcosm must bear testimony to the macrocosm, and the macrocosm to the microcosm ...'¹⁵

¹⁴ Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, III, pp. 495–6.

¹⁵ Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, II, p. 432.

The analogy of this procedure to the general approach of Western Existentialism is strong. There, too, there is attention to the subjective, often neglected in the sciences. For the Existentialist, as for Swami Vivekananda, the point of departure for metaphysical thinking is the analysis of human inner experience. This in turn allows the Existentialist who has religious inclinations to interpret faith from the point of view of existential experience; while the physical and biological sciences deal with another aspect of reality. Thus in the end there can be no possible conflict between faith and science, so long as they remain within their respective territories. However, although it is true that Swami Vivekananda suggests that philosophy and religion must start from humanity, from inner experience (and indeed it is important to him that matters should be so, since a common humanity forms the basis of the dialogue between the very divergent religious traditions of the world), yet it is also clear, in view of the two principles of reason we referred to earlier, that he wishes to show that religion is not simply a matter of psychology. One criticism that can be made of Existentialism is that it is open to the interpretation that God is simply a psychological fact; that He, as it were, is apprehended through the faith of the committed individual, but beyond this has no relevance or power. It was therefore necessary for Swami Vivekananda to supplement his approach to philosophical and religious problems through the deliverances of personal experience by an appeal to what in the West has been called 'natural theology'. It is true that he considered (unlike natural theologians such as Aquinas and Udayan) that there are not proofs of the ordinary sort in matters of religion. Reasoning has most definitely to be co-ordinated to immediate experience. In this way, natural and revealed theology (again to use the Western terms) are inseparably united – a truth often forgotten both by those who appeal to reason and by those who appeal to revelation alone. There is significance here in the traditional Indian characterization of the Divine principle as Being, Consciousness and Bliss: Being, for it is the Reality underlying the visible world; Consciousness, because it is open to human experience, something to be realized existentially; Bliss because (from the human point of view at least) it is the goal of the religious and metaphysical quest.

It is clear from the foregoing that Swami Vivekananda's metaphysical reflections were closely intertwined with his religious concerns. In some degree, therefore, it is artificial to separate his philosophy from his spiritual teachings. This is partly why it was useful to distinguish what I called technical philosophy from the elaboration and defence of doctrinal schemes – for the latter form of philosophizing is obviously liable to merge into religious teaching. For this reason, [82] I have tended to concentrate upon those issues in Swami Vivekananda's thinking which will be of interest and relevance to the contemporary Westerner who remains concerned with religion. There are, of course, many today who are in effect materialists (not necessarily at all in a vulgar and disreputable sense – but in the sense of believing that all of reality is ultimately composed of complexes of material entities). At any rate there are many in the West especially who are indifferent to traditional religious values. For them, perhaps, the metaphysics of Swami Vivekananda will not prove so interesting or illuminating. Yet there are many who, though superficially indifferent to religious concerns, still nourish a desire for faith. It is important for them to understand the main issues of religious thinking: in this respect, Swami Vivekananda, by

giving such an incisive expression to a revitalized Hinduism ready to break beyond the bounds of India, can clarify men's insights into the choice before them. As we have seen, some of the problems tackled by Swami Vivekananda, and his solutions thereto, remain, despite changes in the intellectual and scientific climate since he wrote, highly relevant to the contemporary situation. It must be recalled too that not only did he interpret Hinduism to the West so eloquently, but he also interpreted it to India itself. It is therefore worthwhile remembering that his metaphysical reflection frequently took the form of recommending or criticizing aspects of traditional Indian philosophy. Notably, he built his Vedantic conclusions on the basis of an exposition and critique of Samkhya.

These, then, are some comments on Swami Vivekananda's philosophical thinking, as seen from the [83] perspective of 1963. A shrinking world will surely recognize how much it owes to him, the first man really to bring home to the consciousness of the Western world at large the deeper significances of the *Sanatana Dharma*.

Integral Knowledge and the Four Theories of Existence

THE massive yet intricate beauty of *The Life Divine* can conceal from us how a paragraph, a sentence even, may contain within itself a vast range of thought. It is part of the genius of the work that its doctrines are exhibited not in a dry, and therefore unilluminating, sequence, but in the manner of a painting: each new brush-stroke gives novel significance to the others, and the features emerge not by being mechanically filled in, but by a kind of patterned growth. It is therefore hard to deal briefly even with what at first seems a small fragment. For instance, one reads that 'the hard logical and intellectual notion of truth as a single idea which all must accept, one idea or system of ideas defeating all other ideas or systems, . . . is an illegitimate transference from the limited truth of the physical field to the much more complex and plastic field of life and mind and spirit';¹ yet one can hardly discuss this vital point without adverting to the whole edifice of Sri Aurobindo's thought. But perhaps it is not entirely nugatory to link this sentence specifically to his classification of different kinds of metaphysical or religious theories.²

But first, a general word about schemes of classification. It is evident that any metaphysical view must give some account of its possible competitors. For instance, some views (ones which are indirectly criticized in the above quotation and which I shall refer to as 'exclusivist', since they hold that one

¹ Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 788.

² *Ibid.*, the classification is elaborated in Part II, Chapter XVII, p. 609.

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picture or other of spiritual truth is exclusively correct) have a simple account of their rivals: that they are just wrong. Opposed to this way of treating possible opponents is the synthetic approach, whereby other doctrines are absorbed, not rejected.¹ The Judaic religions, for instance, tend to be exclusivist, Hinduism synthetic. And in particular, Sri Aurobindo's integralism is a majestic attempt at synthesis. But perhaps, though the contrast here depicted is just, it should not be drawn too sharply; for it often comes about that a religion, in so far as it is at all missionary and inasmuch as it encounters other faiths that cannot just be dismissed as demonic,² must provide some convincing interpretation of the spiritual experience and dynamism of others. This usually involves a description of other faiths, not quite in their own terms, but in terms of one's own.³ A similar remark may apply to Sri Aurobindo's classification of the theories of existence. To this we now turn.

The four theories are respectively: the supracosmic; the cosmic and terrestrial; the supraterrestrial; and the integral or synthetic or composite. The first of these holds that the supreme Reality is alone entirely real; while the second takes cosmic and terrestrial reality (or becoming) as alone real. The third recognizes both the reality of the world and that of something higher—characteristically, we have here belief in human immortality and a view of life as a temporary sojourn in which ethical and spiritual development constitutes the path to ultimate salvation. Finally, there are views built up out of two or more of these, and in particular there is the integral theory of Sri Aurobindo himself. The most typical instance of supracosmicism is the *Advaita Vedānta*; on the other hand the cosmic view is more characteristically found in Western tradition. This is not to say that there are no instances of the former

¹ Absorbed, or sublated; see Appendix A, *A Glossary of Sanskrit Terms in the Life Divine* (Pondicherry, 1952).

² Consider, e.g. the view of Roman and Greek gods in early Christianity.

³ Cp., for a similar point, Austin Farrer in his article on 'Examination of Theological Belief' in *Faith and Logic*, ed. Basil Mitchell (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957), p. 13, where he distinguishes between those things *off* which we read religious truths and those *into* which we read them; a like remark applies to the histories and doctrines of religions.

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theory in the West, for there are systems of idealistic metaphysics such as that of Bradley, which in some respects bear a remarkable formal resemblance to Śaṅkara's—though in view of the directly *spiritual* reference of *Advaita*, a nearer parallel would be found in some of the writings of Eckhart.¹ On the other hand, though naturalistic views have, in consonance with the rise of science and the decline of Christendom, become widespread in the West, there are instances of them in the East, e.g. the *Cārvāka* metaphysics.

Sri Aurobindo criticizes these two theories as being incomplete. In regard to cosmicism: it denies the simple affirmation that there is a 'beyond'.² It ignores the teaching of spiritual experience and so will not ultimately satisfy human nature. On the other hand, supracosmicism normally issues in the feeling that the world is illusory, a dream, a mirage; and, even where it does not, it yet assigns no ultimate significance to the individual being. And thus it negates something which cannot be dismissed 'as a device for a minor operation, the coiling and uncoiling of an insignificant spiral amid the vast circlings of the Eternal's becoming in the universe'.³

But when we turn to supraterrestrialism, we might think at first glance that it is a kind of synthesis, for it affirms the reality of both the Transcendent and the material cosmos. Thus, it has been remarked by William Temple that Christianity is the most materialistic of the world's religions. This is partly because theistic faiths do not normally stress the illusoriness of the cosmos (for the dualism implicit in theism—the dualism between Creator and creature, Object of worship and worshipper—must affirm the reality of each term in the relation and must also see the world as purposive and hence becoming in its own right subsistent); and partly because in particular the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation contains the idea that God Himself sanctifies material existence. It may be noted in

¹ See Rudolf Otto's classic, *Mysticism East and West* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1932). Eckhart's description of the world, on one occasion, as 'a mere nothing' is reminiscent of what Sri Aurobindo calls a sense of 'the vanity of cosmic existence' (*The Life Divine*, p. 436).

² Cp. *The Life Divine*, p. 18.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 459: the reference is to the *Vedānta* of the *Upaniṣads*, where, says Sri Aurobindo, the becoming of *Brahman* is accepted as a reality.

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passing that the prevalent materialism in some Western societies is perhaps a reflection of this feature of Christianity: theism without the *Theos* leaves matter; whereas the equation does not quite hold in India: remove the personal God and you may be left with the Absolute. There are two directions in which one may desert an *Ísvara*.¹

Why then is supraterrestrialism not a synthesis in Sri Aurobindo's sense? It must be borne in mind that on his view there are three elements which must be preserved, and held together, in any picture of reality which paints it in its full richness: first, the reality of the cosmos; second, the reality of that which transcends it; and third, the reality of the individual being. Now certainly—at least superficially—theistic religion preserves these three elements. But if we consider Sri Aurobindo's main criticisms of supraterrestrialism, we gain a clue towards understanding the matter. For he remarks that its defect lies in the way it treats man's existence in the present world; for although the view contains the truth that there is a higher realm of being (often described as a heaven or paradise), the picture of man as in a fallen or unsatisfactory state in this world, such that his ultimate salvation lies in another realm, neglects the truth that the worlds of higher consciousness are not the only possible habitation for a perfected soul.² This life also is part of the Spirit's self-expression. Hence, supraterrestrialism falls into an error similar to that of supracosmicism—it represents an improper notion of the status of the cosmos and of human existence.

One or two subsidiary questions arise out of the above scheme of classification of views. A notoriously difficult metaphysical system to dovetail into any general account of religions is that of Buddhism and in particular the *Theravāda*. For it cannot be said that according to the latter there is a unitary absolute; hence, it is hard to count it as supracosmic. Moreover, the impermanence of all entities in the cosmos is not full-blown unreality. On the other hand, the *Theravāda* is not, in the sense

¹ Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 621: 'The higher self-knowledge begins therefore as soon as man has got beyond his preoccupation with the relation of Nature and God to his superficial being, his most apparent self.'

² *Ibid.*, p. 472.

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in which the Judaic group of faiths is, supraterrestrial, in that it is agnostic about individual immortality,¹ and there is no God to provide a heaven for His creatures. But neither is it simple cosmicism, for there is an unborn, an uncompounded: there is *nirvāṇa*. Perhaps it is best to see the *Theravāda* as combining elements of the cosmic and supracosmic views. For, like supracosmicism, its supreme goal is a kind of self-annihilation; but like cosmicism, it does not preach a substantive Reality beyond the cosmos.

This points to a formal or logical feature of composite and synthetic theories. For the two simpler views, cosmicism and supracosmicism, are overtly exclusivist: not merely is it said that the cosmos or the Absolute is reality, but that it is the *only* reality. Materialism, for instance, rejects what is yielded in spiritual experience. It is absurd to suppose that a synthetic view can absorb *all* the features of that which it synthesizes; for clearly the synthesis itself cannot reject spiritual intuition, even though it may delight in the clearing away of cobwebs induced by such a rejection.² What it admires is the positive elements, or at least some of these; what it denies is the rejections. But how is one to hit upon the right method of synthesizing? Sri Aurobindo's procedure here is of the greatest moment—for, as glimmers forth from his reflections upon the fundamental theories, he is illumined by experience in selecting the main facts to be accounted for. And the dark flaw in cosmicism, for example, is that it is blind to, and denies, a living facet of experience, just as supracosmicism rejects the witness of the individual being. Similarly, but for different reasons, supraterrestrialism—at least as it is found in the West—is exclusivist; and we have in Sri Aurobindo's strictures a reflection of the long tradition of Hinduism: that no one theory can declare others to be utterly false. Yet the real defect in supraterrestrialism, on his view, is again that it neglects the possible opening up of a wider experience, as implied in the notion of a higher existence, in this visible world that we know

¹ *Majjhima-Nikaya*, Vol. I, p. 483 ff., etc.

² Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 13: 'Rather we shall observe with respect and wonder the work that Atheism has done for the Divine and admire the services that Agnosticism has rendered in preparing the illimitable increase of knowledge.'

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so well. It wrongly creates a great gulf between the cosmos and the higher realm, to the detriment ultimately of the former and the distortion, in some degree, of the latter.

So much then, all too briefly, for the reasons why the synthesis has to embrace the insights of the three fundamental world-views. It is now perhaps worth reflecting on some points about the synthetic method. I have remarked above that Sri Aurobindo looks to experience and intuition¹ for the basic facts of existence which need to be woven together into an integral theory. And indeed it may be said that it is different varieties of experience which yield the three fundamental views. Now this points towards an important aspect of the present predicament. In the West, with the permeation of society by science and naturalism and the decay, in some regions, of traditional religion, there exist two main ways in which spiritual truth can be defended. The first is by philosophical metaphysics and the second is by appeal to experience and intuition. Yet, as Sri Aurobindo remarks, 'the concepts of metaphysical knowledge do not in themselves fully satisfy the demand of our integral being. . . . Our nature sees things through two eyes always, for it views them doubly as idea and as fact and therefore every concept is incomplete for us and to a part of our nature almost unreal. . . .'² But worse; it is doubtful whether much trust can be placed in philosophical metaphysics of the old sort—for the play of logic upon concepts such as *causality*, to generate conclusions about a First Cause, and so on, is by no means evidently legitimate. It may be true that those who have intimations of the spiritual find their beliefs encouraged by the natural metaphysical feeling that the existence of the cosmos cries for an explanation. Yet it can hardly be thought that there is a method of *a priori* reasoning which can by itself yield sure truths about reality.³ Hence, belief must defend itself by reference to experience, and this is where there arises a painful paradox for exclusivism. To claim there is one revelation, and to back the claim by appeal

¹ For the use of this term see *The Life Divine*, footnote p. 63.

² Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 64: 'Intuition brings to man those brilliant messages from the Unknown which are the beginning of his higher knowledge. Reason only comes in afterwards to see what profit it can have of the shining harvest.'

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to humanity's deeper intuitions, is seemingly, in the light of the facts, a contradiction. For the facts tell us unmistakably that the spiritual adventure of men, whether at a superficial or profound level, is not constricted to one culture or family of cultures. Such an illusion has been generated by ignorance of others, but neither the Holy Roman Empire nor *Jambudvīpa* was the full circle of humanity, nor was the outsider justly named *barbarous* or *mleccha*. A deeper acquaintance with alien cultures must lead one to recognize their spiritual as well as their other glories. Hence an appeal to experience, though it may be harmonized with the view that one's own *Weltanschauung* gives the fullest picture, or the quintessential picture, cannot be consonant with extreme exclusivism.

It therefore seems inevitable at the present juncture for religions to take the path towards synthesis. Hinduism, it may be replied, does not need to do this, since it has already done it. Yet there are points where traditional Hindu theories need supplementation perhaps; and indeed it is Sri Aurobindo's genius that he has provided a framework of thought which, while it grows out of such ancient concepts as *Brahman*, *puruṣa*, *prakṛti*, *prāṇa*, etc., yet does not have merely a static view of things, but absorbs the sense, gained from both science and history, of the unfolding of man's spirit. The importance of this lies not just in its presentation of matter and life as evolving, but in its evolutionary description of religion and metaphysics. Fogazzaro, in his moving novel *Il Santo*, made the point that a new set of teachings, a new spiritual movement, needs not merely ideas to express it, but a saint to give it power and legitimacy. Even those who do not adhere to Sri Aurobindo's teachings must surely ask—though without the irony of the original:

*kavīyamānah ka iha pra vocad?
devam manah kuto adhi prajātam?*¹

('Who has here, like a poet-seer, given this teaching?
Where has this divine mind sprung from?')

And to ask the question is already to grant the need for some synthesis or reinterpretation of belief.

¹ *Rg-Veda*, I.164.18.

Reflections on Chinese Religious and Other Worldviews in Regard to Modernization

China was faced in the 19th and 20th centuries with two related problems. One was how to establish national strength in order to fight off the vast menace of outside forces which were, unusually, treating China not as a center but as a periphery. The other was how to modernize, in view of new technologies and modes of production conveyed into Chinese consciousness by those selfsame marauding powers. Now much depended, as we can see from other examples, on mental factors. A revolution in thinking was needed. In differing ways the emerging India of the period and Japan, to cite two primary examples, were able to marshall the requisite mental resources. China found it difficult. Indeed, China's first task, namely establishing national strength, was ultimately achieved by harnessing to its own goals a Western ideology, namely Marxism, which was effective in war and to some extent in social transformation, but itself proved to be, at least in its high Maoist form, deficient in modernizing ability. But the traditional religious forces, namely the four religions of China in the shape of Confucian philosophy, folk religion, Taoism and Buddhism, turned out to be seriously wanting both from a nationalist and a modernizing point of view. I wish in this paper to explore these themes.

Let me begin by sketching the menace to China. It was unlike other threats. It was water-borne: it was British and European sea power which opened up the soft underbelly of China to invasion and marauding. The Great Wall could give no protection, for it pointed in the wrong direction. Moreover, the Westerners had superior naval technology: excellent navigation, cannon, later ironclads, good military deployment. As the 19th century went on, the underpinning of science and engineering which lay behind naval and military power became more obvious. Science itself represented a shock to the Chinese intellectual system. The whole ancient examination system focused on literary and religious texts. But science brought brash new ways of conceiving the world. So far the menace can be summed up as involving two things: military power and science. But over the horizon lay other forces, swiftly appreciated by the Japanese during the Meiji period, but more sluggishly apprehended by the Chinese elite.

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One of these forces was nationalism. The growth of the industrial world required the formation of larger units of human community than the feudal states and parcels of land which had made Europe hitherto, in many areas, look like a jigsaw. The formation of a modern national entity was important for such factors vital to a modern society as universal education, good communications and a common language, but also a wonderful way of harnessing human loyalties in the drive towards modernity and ultimately prosperity. Nationalism rampant became a grandly self-confident imperialism: to counter it a new nationalism had to be created. India succeeded, and the Japanese merely developed further their island consciousness. The Chinese needed more stirring. Another force over the horizon from the vantage-point of Peking was the industrialism that grew in dialectic with the advancement of science. The industrial power of Britain was the hidden muscle of her fleets and armies. So unseen but sensed in China were those forces: nationalism and industrialization. They were needed by China too.

But more disturbing forces were behind the horizon too, and behind the industrial nationalism of the enemy. Those forces could be briefly described as new styles of education and democratic, or at least semi-democratic, institutions. You could not develop science and engineering, nor indeed industrialization, without beginning to create a modern educational system. But that in turn was somewhat unclearly conceived as something which depended on a modern sort of political constitution. Actually, roughly speaking this was a correct judgement: how can you have critical and innovative thought without having an open society? And how can you have science without recognizing its universality, and accessibility therefore to anyone with brains? So science loosely implied democracy. In brief, behind the military power of Europe lay industrialization and science, and behind them lay new kinds of education and political ideology.

Beyond these forces in turn lay philosophies. Here there was some confusion in the West, perhaps not immediately perceived in Peking. On the one hand the new capitalist world created the dominant philosophy of utilitarianism: that is, dominant in the long run. But Britain and other Western powers were also in their own way traditionalist. In particular Britain encouraged missions, most strongly Protestant ones. Christianity was also thought of by a number of prominent intellectuals in the West as modernizing: it was a counterpose to religions and ideas in the East which were supposedly anti-developmental and benighted. It was true that Protestant Christianity had been a main force behind the emergence of capitalism and thus of the industrial world. It was perhaps no coincidence that it was two Scotsmen, Adam Smith and James Watt, who pioneered two vital things in the emergence of the

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modern world: capitalist economics and the steam engine. You needed hardly anything else to launch the new world. Behind the Scots lay Calvinism. Nevertheless, there were obvious conflicts between Christian thinking and practice and the new philosophy of utilitarianism and the emergence of evolutionary science. Ultimately they were contradictions which could be overcome. Anyway, both utilitarianism and Christianity were forces lying behind education and political ideology, including the notion of the superiority of Western civilization. Since utilitarianism was humanistic, one can say that both humanism and the Christian faith were challenges which other cultures needed to confront during the high colonial period.

So in brief what China had to cope with were military power, science, nationalism, industrialization, education, political ideology, humanism and Christianity. A handful.

A religious tradition is of course primarily concerned with religious, ethical and spiritual issues. Nevertheless it normally engages with wider issues: with science, because it has a cosmology (or a range of them, but I shall simplify here for the sake of clarity); with education, because it has a view on authority, including authoritative texts; with democracy, because it has an ethical attitude towards human equality and state governance; with nationalism, because it has a view on its place in the history and social fabric of the country; with humanism and Christianity because of the nature of its own spiritual message and moral concerns; even with industrialization in so far as the latter begins to affect the other areas just listed.

Generally speaking folk religion does not have much to contribute in the dialogue with the eight forces mentioned above. It is often overwhelmed by incoming evangelism; it does not have much to say to science; it is coordinated to the structure of the larger religious traditions. It is often too local in character to be able to face up to universal ideas and practices. It can easily be ignored or rejected by the intellectual leadership. More important were the struggles of the major traditions to articulate responses.

Those major religions, of course, have had a symbiotic presence in China, especially in the premodern era. It will be convenient, first, to deal with them on a thematic basis, relating these diverse themes to the task of national mobilization and modernization. Then I shall deal with the religious philosophies expressed by the three in relation to these tasks.

Let me list some major themes: *li* and *ch'i* as cosmological ingredients; the *tao*; *yin* and *yang*; the ethos of propriety; the ethos of anarchy; alchemy and the cultivation of ancestors. By considering the last we touch on a theme also important in folk religion. Could some or all of these themes be harnessed to the process of modernization and the mobilization of national spirit and force?

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The cosmology could be taken in a positivistic way to chime in with scientific ideas. Thus Fung Yu-lan (1895) could express a recasting of traditional Neoconfucian thought, influenced somewhat by Chu Hsi (1130-1200), which used the dialectic of *li* and *dh'i*: but it could not be said that their deployment was all that favorable to science, since *li* turned out to be something static. Still, while the theme of *li* could be scientifically interpreted (in terms of the laws of modern physics), its history was not promising, since it had a strongly valuational flavor, while modern scientific knowledge tends to be built on the separation of value and fact. Anyway, as far as cosmology goes, there were certainly elements in Neoconfucian thought not inimical to science, and these have sometimes been built on to express the modernity of the Confucian tradition.

The *tao* has a more promising place in modern thinking. It can well express something of the holism and naturalism of the modern era, and can also be used in relating modern biology to general cosmology. But its history in China is also associated with quietism, and this is not a theme in demand to fuel a national struggle.

The *yin* and *yang* polarity somewhat dimly suggests the dialectic of Hegel and Marx: maybe it helped to make Chinese intellectuals susceptible to the dialectic. But it is not a highly completed dichotomy in the business of concrete explanations. It did not give much handle on the explanation of industrial life, or help greatly with the other challenges to 19th and early 20th century China.

The ethos of propriety pervaded the Confucian tradition, of course. It could impede the social reconstruction needed to make China efficient in dealing with outside forces. While, if liberated from some of the socially hierarchical forces of the 19th century it could provide a certain basis of solidarity which has paid handsome dividends during the recent phase of capitalism, it could impede modernization if it solidified artificial class distinctions of a generally feudal nature inimical to the development of a modern economy.

On the other hand the Taoist ethos of anarchy does not conduce to national reconstruction. It is true that the turbulent ideologies generated by the anarchist tradition in China could stimulate rebellions that might have recreated Chinese society, such as the Taiping revolution; in general, though, the countercultural aspects of such movements did not easily conduce to a form of patriotism. That was one of the needs of 19th and 20th century China.

The later Taoist interest in alchemy was of course highly inimical to a good regard for modern science: it was a kind of ancient system which because of its technical pretensions could inhibit openmindedness towards alternative theories.

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The veneration of ancestors solidified belief in the family and in wider social units - belief which in the latter part of the 20th century could help in the development of education, entrepreneurial adventure and other ingredients of the capitalist substructure.

What, then, of the potential of the traditions to help create a nationalist spirit and a modern outlook? It may be noted that Confucianism suffered from a twofold disadvantage in the late 19th century. In the first place it was the ideology of an imperial bureaucracy. The intense literary and philosophical education built up under the aegis of the Confucian spirit was not well designed to appreciate the importance of science. The bureaucracy were highly educated in one way, but highly ignorant in another. The second disadvantage of the Confucian worldview in the last days of the Empire was that it operated in the service of a foreign dynasty: the Manchus - at least perceived as foreign. Thus there were ambiguities in Chinese patriotism. It is true that the forward-looking K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927) could attempt widespread reforms in the name of a reconstructed China. But some of the new Confucian thought, such as that of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873-1928) turned its back on science in the name of the Chinese tradition: it sang a refrain not different from that of other romanticists of the era, who attacked the materialism of the West. Liang also was involved in the Rural Reconstruction Party, which did not fully accept the industrial revolution, typically centered on great urban centers.

Confucian traditionalism did not accord with the spirit of modern education, which was largely Western in ethos. Nor did it chime in easily with the call for democratic institutions which was becoming more insistent among the Chinese elite. It was therefore indeed hard, during the period under review, to merge Confucian values and modern scientific and 'rational' approaches to the solution of human problems.

It was not surprising that a number of thinkers during the 1920s and 1930s should follow Occidental models, espousing forms of materialism and scientism, as in the writings of Chang Tung-sun (1886-1960) and others.

There were further obstacles to modernization in the social setting of the ideology. The new China called for a new kind of learning and a very different spirit of teaching and research. The abolition of the imperial examination system was a sign of the breakdown of older modes. It would take some time before an East-West synthesis incorporating Confucianism into a Western-style education system could be achieved (basically this did not occur until the second half of the 20th century - too late in the process of Chinese reconstruction). The functioning of Confucianism as an ideology for the old bureaucracy and the feudal structures of China lent it extraordinary ambiguity in the context of the drive for modernization.

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Confucianism was more successful in providing resistance to Christian missions, or at least to Christian doctrine. Actually, of course, the missions were a modernizing force, especially through their work in establishing higher education in the modern and Western mode. On the other hand, Christian belief did not mesh in easily with Chinese nationalism, and in some respects in its late 19th century form did not blend easily with the results and dogmas of science at that time. There could also be a whole contrast, echoing themes in other cultures (such as neo-Hindu apologetic, Arielism in Latin America, etc.), contrasting Western materialism with the more integrated and refined traditions of China. Such an opinion was forcibly expressed in the *Recollections of a Trip to Europe* by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873-1928) and in the work of Liang Shu-ming (1893-1968).

While Confucian elements entered into the ideological writings of Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) and of Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), it is an interesting comment that both of these major leaders of the Kuomintang were Christian. Moreover Sun came to be highly critical of the key slogan of Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529), namely emphasizing the unity of knowledge and action: Sun wanted to add that ignorance was the chief obstacle to action among the Chinese masses, and that knowledge is hard and action easy. He saw in effect that there needed to be big changes in Chinese education in the light of modern conditions. Part of the problem of the Kuomintang turned out to be fatal ambiguities in its process towards nationalism and modernization. The Chinese middle class was insufficiently developed and unified to support a liberal program with Confucian flavors: it was often too closely linked to foreign interests, while the Confucian ideology of the rural elite was not purged of its conservative and backward-looking elements.

If we turn to Buddhism, we note that the primary reforming thinker of the modern era was quite consistently trying to restore vigor to the life of contemplation and its accompanying philosophy which was what, in brief, Buddhism was all about. T'ai Hsü (1889-1947) was insistent that Buddhism is atheistic. He denounced both imperialism and communism, seeing Buddhism as the true upholder of liberty (but for him freedom and happiness were much deeper concepts than current Western political theory maintained). He saw the heart of Buddhism as being enlightenment or illumination, summed up as the existential recognition of the flux of the world (its impermanence), the origin of the 'world' in consciousness, the non-existence of the self, and the ultimate non-existence of the universe. While such ideas had a modern ring to them, in some ways, chiming in with new developments in subatomic science and quantum physics, they were not a good basis for national reconstruction or social reform. Indeed, they were antithetical to nationalism as a divisive sentiment.

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In general Buddhist reform meant a restoration of the true purposes of the Sangha. China did not have the same tradition as Sri Lanka, for instance, where the glories of an earlier Buddhist civilization could be given a vigorous Sinhalese patriotic meaning, and where the chronicles had a chauvinistic ring to them, thus injecting Buddhism into mythic history. Though Buddhism has a remarkably prescient philosophy or series of philosophies (in China above all the Hua-yen), making it very modern, it did not provide the ambience of the growth of science, probably because it lacked three advantages of Western religion and philosophy - the notion of the cosmos as displaying the mind of God, the turbulent dialectic between different elements of Western civilization (Christian-classical, Protestant-Catholic, etc.) and a dualistic conception of objectivity. Western thought and research was able to overcome the disadvantage of the substantialism which was long so dominant. Eastern philosophical advantages turned out in the case of Buddhism to be disadvantages.

Finally, if we look to Taoism, we may note that its early form, as the philosophy of harmony with nature and of flowing with the cosmos, was not likely to produce the cutting edge needed in the reconstruction of China. It shared some of the problems in this respect displayed by Buddhism: its noble contemplative side was not greatly conducive to action. At best its anarchy and rebelliousness could inspire a certain democratic and egalitarian zeal, and Taoist elements were incorporated into the thought of Mao Zedong (1893-1976). As for later Taoism, its preoccupations with alchemy and the pursuit of longevity set it firmly in conflict with modern scientific methods.

Both taken singly and in combination the three religions of China did not at the relevant time provide fertile soil for modern national reconstruction, even if we can now see ways of harnessing their insights to a refreshing and harmonious worldview. I have explored some of these later issues, with special reference to Chinese civilization, in my *Buddhism and Christianity: Rivals and Allies* (1993).

All this left the field to Marxist philosophy. This, being anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist, and claiming to be scientific, could provide a suitable vehicle for modernization and nationalism, especially because it also demanded social transformation and was adept for - indeed eager for - violent struggle. Mao for instance proved to be one of the great theorists of war. Of course, Marxism had to be somewhat sinified. Early expositors such as Li Ta-chao/Li Dazhao (1889-1927) were somewhat crudely orthodox. Mao's ideas sinified the teachings in various ways - by realistically giving a major role to the peasants as well as the urban proletariat in the revolutionary struggle, in drawing on some features of Taoist anarchism in depicting the continuing revolution and in providing an

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accessible ethos to the new non-mandarins who would lead the struggle. Nevertheless, the failure of the older traditions was reinforced by Marxism's determination to wipe out the past. China became a strong international-class power because of the Maoist revolution, but unlike India's and Japan's modernization it did not carry over much of its traditional values. This was a heavy price to pay. Moreover, there turned out to be severe problems with Maoism as a modernizing ideology, which can be summed up as follows. First, though Marxism claimed to be scientific, the new regime could not foster real science, partly because the latter requires a critical and open ambience (as Popper has well argued), and ideological conformity was severely inhibiting to Chinese science and intellectual life. Second, Mao's anarchism came out in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which largely destroyed the Chinese educational system for a time, causing considerable setbacks to the modernizing process. Third, Marxism favors a command economy, and this inhibited the economic development of China, until the changes of the post-Mao era. Although strong development is possible without democracy, as various examples such as South Korea have indicated, it is hard for a system to resist democratic pressures under modern conditions. This remains a problem for China.

China could be said to have lumbered into the modern era through having adopted the slogan that one's enemy's enemy is one's friend (a maxim that in the long run has little truth in it): Marxism was a gift to China in that it offered a systematic and supposedly scientific way of destroying the impact of colonialism. It was a Western philosophy with which to beat the Westerners. But it demanded severe sacrifices from the Chinese; notably the sacrifice of a great deal of their traditional past. The transitions of the Indian and the Japanese, for all their traumas, were less drastic. Whether there is a place for purged and purified forms of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism in the future China remains to be seen. They all contain important modern elements and may jointly or singly form a worldview compatible both with science and social reconstruction.

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CHAPTER 9

Maoism and Religion*

The success and function of Maoism as a practical belief-system, or ideology, can be illuminated from the fires which consumed the fabric of nineteenth century China. That vast and imperial country was suffering from weakness and shock — weakness internal, the shock from the sea. The Manchu dynasty was not competent and still for many Chinese had a foreign taste. However, the structure of education and bureaucracy continued to hold the Middle Kingdom together, and Chinese culture could still look with some delicate disdain upon the arts and thoughts of outsiders and tributaries.

But this only made the shock the more wounding. For China discovered that nineteenth century seapower rested upon an alarming set of new technologies — complex rigging, heavy guns, and later iron and steam — and was backed up by an aggressive industrial imperialism. Japan reacted with vigour and effectiveness to the shock. China failed to, until Mao. Why so? Briefly, on the Nippon side, they were used to absorbing and using external cultural forms: they had learned from China, and now they would learn from the scientific tendrils invisibly stretching forth from Admiral Perry. But China was imperial and the centre of the world. Declining empire is not a time when a people learns easily.

Nevertheless, in its convulsions after the hateful and disintegrative Opium War, China almost blindly generated some attempts at a riposte and a reconstruction. Above all, there was the amazing rebellion (or some say revolution) of the heavenly Taipings, under the prophetic

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Hung. Before I turn to this, for it is a most vital episode for the diagnosis of Mao, let me jump forward a bit and indicate what solutions for China were almost bound to fail.

One such was the demand to take Western forms of science and organisation and bind them to a still intact Chinese literary and spiritual culture. Reconstruction had to mean more than that if only because the Chinese bureaucracy, through the examination system and by hallowed Confucian tradition, was partly woven out of that culture. The mind of a mandarin could not simultaneously harbour the thoughts of a Brunel or a Gladstone. Likewise, it was unlikely that liberal democracy could be fitted onto Chinese life, as if a coolie could sport a topper. The middle class whose crowning political achievement was modern democracy did not sufficiently exist in China. Further, the middle class was inevitably riddled with compradors: for the growth of industry and capital in China was necessarily entangled with Western powers. It is true that Sun Yat-sen evolved an ingenious blend of social democratic and traditional ideas, and perhaps the early Kuomintang had some chance of reshaping China. But it suffered from at least three defects. First, it had not a strong rural base. Second, the betrayal of China at Versailles geared China to a fiercer anti-Western nationalism than the semi-Western Kuomintang could express. Third, its military wing, necessary in the unification of China in the warlord period, was too strong, and so the party and the ideology declined into a framework for the acrobatic power of Chiang Kai-shek. Maoism by contrast had certain secrets of success, which we shall come to. But what of mad Hung and the Taipings?

One of the recurrent features of Chinese history has been the peasant rebellion. Bad crops or other dislocations generate revolt. If a little successful, the rebels take a city here and there. Ultimately central government has to stir, and then great forces overwhelm the rebels. Such sporadic outbursts were little more than desperation multiplied by banditry. The difference with the Taipings is that they gave such blind revolt a vision: an ideology to work with. This was of course somewhat influenced by Protestant Christianity. It was out of contact with that that Hung came to have his visions; and it was partly by absorbing Western ideas, but in a religious garb, that he was able to weave together a pattern of practical thought. Thus

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Hung blended his own prophetic charisma with a mixture of religious hope and social reform. His programme was surprising, and looked forward to Mao very clearly: radical land reform, moral changes (e.g. a ban on opium), equality for women, a reform of the literary language to bring it closer to ordinary speech, calendar reform. Hung was revolutionary, collectivist, egalitarian. And for a period central China was dominated by the reforming Taipings, and they even controlled the southern capital, Nanking. They did, however, fail. The reasons are revealing.

First, they never were militarily quite strong enough, and their generalship proved inadequate. But in Mao, Chu Teh and others the Communists had great strategists and military leaders. Second, the Taipings, foolishly, betrayed their own ideals in the latter phases of their rule. They turned from vision and purity to power and concubines. On the other hand, the Communist leadership has been careful to cultivate a non-luxurious image. Third, the Taiping ideology was not really intellectual in content, and this gave it a double weakness. For it meant that they could not routinize their charisma through an intellectually convinced bureaucratic class; and it meant that they had little interest in modern science and technology (and so were marked down for eventual defeat). By contrast, the Maoists could preach an ideology of strength and some intellectual power, one which moreover was always geared to practical emphases of policy and administration. Moreover, Marxism has the aura of appearing to be scientific, and part of its hope lies in the promise of conquering men's material problems by the application of modern science. Fourth, the Taiping ideology was in its way pro-Western, because of its connection with missionary Christianity, and this somewhat weakened it in its collision with the foreign powers, who ultimately were alarmed at Taiping pretensions. Further, the ideology by the same token was too foreign, and not sufficiently related to the past traditions. On the other hand, Marxism had the virtue of being both Western (and therefore in its way modern) and anti-colonialist and revolutionary (and therefore in harmony with the feelings of Chinese nationalism). Further, in its Maoist form, as we shall see, it contained certain echoes of the spiritual and social traditions of ancient China. These, then, are some of the lessons to be learned from the Taipings as we glance forward from them to the ultimate success of Mao.

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We can formalize the lessons by reference to a theory of the conditions which Maoism had to fulfil, in regard to the major previous Chinese traditions. Since it had to mobilize some of the feelings and energies of those traditions, it needed to fulfil what I call an *analogical function*. But since it needed to overthrow the old order, it also needed to perform what I shall call *content reversal*. I shall illustrate. But first, we need to glance at some of the weaknesses of the traditions as they moved into the modern era.

Confucianism had the weakness of its very influence. Because of its special position in government, and because government was disintegrating, Confucianism paid the penalty of its old power. Further, with its hierarchical picture of human and especially family relations, it was ill-suited to a world in which social change was prerequisite of successful national resistance to outer forces. Again, Confucianism was not very theoretical (except in some of its medieval neo-Confucian forms), and so not easily adapted to an overarching modern *Weltanschauung* such as a new generation of Western educated intellectuals might seek.

Similarly, later Taoism, though it retained some of the socially anarchistic elements of its ancient origin, was un-scientific, superstitious and without great doctrinal sophistication. It might still have a purchase on the sentiments of secret societies and rural rebels, but it was scarcely in a position to be a dynamic force in a reconstituted China.

Of the three great, and intermingled, Chinese traditions, Buddhism retained the greatest potential. Its practical emphasis on meditation, its ritual hold over the people, its elaborate metaphysics and its signs of revival gave it strength, and yet it suffered from some fatal drawbacks in a period of nationalist revolt. First, it was too pacific, too other-worldly. As later in Vietnam its instincts were neutralist. But something fiercer and bolder was needed to help throw out the foreign devils and make China strong once more. Second, its attitudes to science and technology were, in the Chinese context, ambiguous (but actually modern cosmology is much nearer Buddhist cosmology than it is to any of the other traditional religious pictures of the universe). There remained a problem of how to bring together a rediscovery of

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Buddhism's intellectual resources and the new education available out of the West.

Nor was Islam or Christianity likely to capture the soul of China, even if Muslims were numerous in the western regions and Christianity could be dressed in scientific modernity. How then did Maoism present analogical function and content reversal,

First, regarding Confucianism: at the state level, Confucianism implied a theory of government and an ethos for the governing bureaucracy. The Marxists of course had such a theory and such an ethos, only now instead of Heaven's mandate there was the People's. Indeed in Mao's poetry the equation of Heaven and People lies only half-concealed. Thus:

Lofty emotions were expressed in self-sacrifice
So the sun and moon were asked to give a new face to Heaven.
In delight I watch a thousand waves of rice and beans
And heroes everywhere going home in the smoky sunset.

The Chairman could indeed express the will of the new Heaven and stand as its ceremonial symbolic core, as once did the Confucian emperor.

At the family level a new substitute for the family and clan grouping was required, and this sense of community was fostered in the work-brigade and more widely in the commune.

At the same time, the content reversal in regard to Confucius was severe. Heaven was brought down to earth. Equality destroyed hierarchy. Service became important, rather than respect and generosity. Democratic centralism replaced hierarchic bureaucracy. Dirty hands, not the plump fingers of the scholar, are beautiful. The future, not the ancestors, is the focus of solidarity. It is not surprising that campaigns against Confucius recur, for he symbolizes the antique and unjust social order the Communists overthrew, and need to guard against still in the mind. Mao testifies that even as a child he hated Confucius.

As for Taoism, it had secret functions of anarchy and rebellion, going back to the acting-through-not-acting of its anti-Confucian origin, in the beautiful and mysterious anthology known as the *Tao-teh-ching*,

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composed of course by the non-existent and so appropriately influential Lao-tse (how better to found a religion than by not founding it?). Taoism had, to use modern jargon, also a certain environmentalism. Conformity with nature has been the well from which it has drawn the waters of its life, even despite the infestation of those waters by an unnecessary polytheism and ritualism. So Maoism represents an analogical functioning — it drew life not merely from secret societies and from related peasant rebellion and banditry (for after all some of those in the early romantic days of Chingkangshan and the beginnings of Mao's rural guerrilla movement were frankly bandits, and Mao admired them — a point played down in the later hagiography). It also drew life from the Taoist environmentalism: there is not merely the naturalism of Mao's poetry, but more importantly the attempt to avoid the mistakes of the industrial revolution in the West. Of course, production is needed, but it should merge town, country and more widely nature. So there are analogous echoes of the Tao in Mao.

But the content reversal is strong. Mao is frankly interested in and good at warfare. He is no pacifist or non-action man. He therefore repudiates quite strongly the (to his mind) simplistic peaceableness of Taoist anarchism, that is found in its early expressions. Again, the magical aspect of later Taoism is repudiated through an adherence to the values of modern science and technology. Muttering priests are nothing: in Sinkiang we make the bomb.

As for Buddhism, again there is a turn from pacific withdrawal. Life is tougher, bloodier. There is hardly call for meditation. Maybe in his poems Mao becomes contemplative, but really the verses are tough, even harsh, and only overlaid with a certain nostalgia perhaps inevitable in the medium. Of course it is delightful that a leader like Mao is a good poet. You do not expect it from Brezhnev or Hitler or Mussolini or Roosevelt or Chiang. But we should not mistake Mao's literary quality for a kind of contemplation, certainly not in the Buddhist style. Further, Mao is critical of the Chinese scholasticism of Buddhism. He did not see through that to anything perhaps beyond the devotional piety of his mother. So he rejected ancient wisdom, such as he saw that it was. Also he and his followers were not much interested in rebirth. This doctrine was originally alien to China, of course, and perhaps never had the grip it did in India. But Maoism

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is naturally committed to the social origins of evil in men's lives. So the great substructure of the whole Buddhist endeavour towards liberation is destroyed by this rejection of rebirth and karma.

It therefore is clear that the new ideology which was to be the matrix of the new Chinese revolution reversed the values and ideas of the older traditions. In this way it attacked the mental fabric of Chinese society in the interest of weaving a new tapestry in the soul which could be consulted in order to picture the new society which the liberation was going to bring out.

Since Mao is playing (very successfully it seems) in the same league as Confucius, the Buddha and Lao tse, one may well ask whether what he offers, somewhat forcibly, to China, is a religion. The question is important largely because it opens up the issue of the relationship between Maoism and the great religions. Perhaps more particularly it opens up the question of the relationship between Maoism and Christianity, I shall comment on both these matters, but before I do so I wish to comment on the problem of what religion or a religion is.

Roughly there are three main approaches to the definition of religion. One is by content, another by formal characteristics or as I call them dimensions, and the third is by existential significance. Thus, regarding the first approach, there was for long the assumption that religion could be defined by reference to God or the gods. Put crudely it is belief in God. More subtly, it is belief in the ultimate (whatever concerns man ultimately). Some would use the term 'transcendent' to distinguish the focus of religious belief from that of for example humanism. The effort to define religion through its focus is not likely to be successful. For one thing not all religions place God or even the gods at the centre. Thus Theravada Buddhism and Jainism do not rank the gods as ultimate, and as for a Creator, he is absent. Alternatively, if one is not very specific and uses such abstractions as 'what concerns man ultimately' or 'the Transcendent', there is a further difficulty or definition. Anyway as to the former formula, it includes ideologies and even non-ideological arrangements of values. Thus Maoism would count as a religion as would also Don Juan's pursuit of women. Maybe there is no harm in that, but the vagueness

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of such terms as *concern* and *transcendent* invites a deeper investigation. Crudely, then, I conclude that definition of religion by content or by focus does not work.

Although existential significance is important, for example the fact and meaning of death, to a religious understanding of the world, it is difficult to define religion in terms of responses in this regard. The reasons are similar to those given in relation to ultimate concern, the transcendent, etc. It is of course vital to recognize that a religion has a special concern for the existential, and flourishes partly to the degree to which it can cope with and express basic human feelings and worries. But the direction of concern is not necessarily or at all the focus of definition.

So we are left with the definition of religion through its formal characteristics or dimensions. The matter is not trivial. For it means that we may have insights into how we may estimate religion. The definitional problem may mean (or not mean) that sociological theories about religion (for example, those of Weber and Durkheim) have relevance in the empirical study of ideology. Again it may throw light on the degree to which it is possible to apply Marxist theory to religion. And so on. It is important in other words to what may be called the science of religion (as described in my books *The Phenomenon of Religion* and *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge*), which may pass over into a more general study of belief-systems.

And on the side I should say something about the effect of all this on Christian theology — and to this point I shall in another context return. It is not that the judgments and valuations of the Christian intellectual are wholly determined by the facts and definitions and theories about religion as empirically or if you prefer it descriptively considered. Clearly not. But the Christian theologian has to engage in a dialectic with the facts and empirical theories. He cannot go on theologizing as though the religious world does not exist. He does not need to be dictated to by the study of religion empirically considered, but he should not dictate to it either. Hence the fruitfulness of the dialectic between the two. For this reason the definition of religion is not a trivial matter, as has been said. Let us therefore look to what I have described as the formal characteristics or dimensions of religion. This can provide a grid for the description and estimate of Maoism.

A religion can be seen as a mixture of people and beliefs. Or perhaps more correctly the practices and feelings and beliefs of people. But let us begin first to divide a religion into its beliefs on the one hand and its practical, experience side on the other. As for beliefs, they have to do with doctrines about the world, stories (or if you prefer the terminology, myths) about the condition of men, or our tradition or nation or what have you, and ethical commitments and rules, such as love and the usual ban on adultery. So far there are the three dimensions of doctrine, myth and ethics. Now we turn to the instantiation of that belief in human feeling and practice.

Here it becomes immediately obvious that in a way the heart of religion is ritual — the mass, the hymnsinging, the confessional, the Quaker meeting, the reading of the Gospel, the meditations on Good Friday, the serious Presbyterian sermon, and so on (I use chiefly Christian examples, but one could obviously point to others in other traditions and faiths). But ritual is not just a force in itself. It expresses feeling. Further feelings and visions occur outside the milieu of ritual. They can strike Paul on the Damascus road or the Buddha under the Bo tree, or more humbly the ordinary worshipper in his work and ordinary life. He may after all be little interested in the refinements of the Nicene creed or the problems of natural theology, but yet may savour hymns and the sentiments of prayer. Then further the adherent of a religion will become whether he likes it or not integrated into some kind of institutional structure — a church or sangha or an Islamic society and so forth. This social aspect of religion can be vitally important.

In brief one can see religion as having six dimensions — the doctrinal, the mythic, the ethical, the ritual, the experiential and the social. Naturally, there are other ways of analysing the phenomenon, but this one is a fairly useful and comprehensive one. What then of Maoism from this perspective?

Doctrines it has in plenty: it has the Old Testament of Marx and the New Testament of Mao, systematized in the official editions of these writers. As for myth, it has the Long March and some other foundational and significant events. But it must be confessed that the mythological is a less important dimension in Maoism than

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the doctrinal. As for the ethical, this is almost embarrassingly prominent, for the puritanism and moral pressures of Chinese communism are ineluctable.

On the more practical side, the rituals of Mao are fairly prominent, but in lieu of incense there are parades, and in lieu of the Bible or the Analects there are the thoughts of Chairman Mao. In lieu of temples there are museums. And so on. The waving of the little red book is a riposte to the gospel, the Christian might think.

As for the experiential, the Chinese Communists are keen on conversion. Lip service is not enough. Men and women need to see the truth in their own experience. Pressures no doubt induce conversion-experiences. Testimonies are published frequently in the pious press of China. And there is little doubt that emotional experience suffuses the leaders' reflections on their heroic past. The Long March is not just a myth, a story or divine or sacred significance: it is also a moving memory.

As for social dimension: quite obviously the Maoist arrangements in China heavily involve the cadres and the Party. It is through this red church that the messages of the revolution are transmitted, and it is through it that the practicalities of the new order in China are realized. Thus Maoism sees its continuance, and it is because of fears about the congealing of the cadre-church that the cultural revolutions are initiated from time to time.

Substantially, then, Maoism fits the religious grid. It might be replied that after all it was unwise to set on one side the definition of religion in relation to content, for after all the denial of the Transcendent marks Maoism sharply off from the great religions. But I think here what we need to say is only this: that Maoism's vision of the world differs from that of the religious, including Christianity, but it still functions greatly as a religion. And we should not lose sight of what might be called the 'spiritual' aspect of Mao's thought.

One of the secrets of his military success was Mao's clear grasp of the importance of the right attitudes and perceptions. War is not won merely by technology: it is the mind behind the gun which is important. Perhaps in these last days as Vietnam collapses, we see

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very clearly indeed that crass minds fly useless helicopters, and ignorant generals fire howitzers in vain. So most generally immense effort is put into changing men's minds. Reeducation is vital, adherence to correct values is *de rigueur*. Mao is looking for his own kind of spiritual transformation of the Middle Kingdom.

In short, it is by no means foolish to see Maoism in the company of the religions.

It is also, if my analysis is correct, necessary to see Maoism as a new Tao, a new prescription for China itself. It may have interests in world revolution, if only to keep up with the Soviet Joneses: but Maoism as it is understood in China is essentially not for export. Thus Western versions of Maoism (very often romantic deviations from mainstream Marxism) have little to do with Mao himself. He is a symbol not a source of far left thinking.

It follows that any Christian dialogue with Mao is really a dialogue with China itself, as it sails down its newly red river. And this dialogue has to be fitted into a wider vision of the place of non-Christian religions cultures in the economy of God. I offer here a few brief reflections.

First, it is a good rule to begin by searching out the good in such a culture and such a tradition. And this perhaps means that God intended the diversity of faiths. I for one would think that a world without the Buddha would have been stunningly poorer than the world we now have. Though it is hard to peer into the might-have-beens of history, it is probable that Mao's victory was both necessary and advantageous for the Chinese people. The solution of her food problem alone is a marvellous and christian achievement, and would compensate for great sufferings. Generally, the bureaucracy is not corrupt, even if it often be harsh. But what of the future?

Here I digress for a moment. I consider that one of the profound achievements of European civilization, and in this Christianity played of course a crucial role, was the establishment of personal freedom and dignity — that which goes under the modern name of social democracy. It is a political expression of the worth of individuals, made in the image of God, and therefore free to create, suffer and take pleasure in each his own way.

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Unfortunately, such a society is hard to make, and often the needs of empty bellies press out the refinements of learning and debate. Men shall not live by newspapers alone. Indeed the dramatic tension of the modern world lies in the collision so often between the demands of social justice and the cries for individual freedom. This is a tension Mao has not solved, for all his talk of democratic centralism, and his wife's ideas on the arts are an apt illustration of the impossibility of dragooning creativity. One of the enigmas therefore is how long the lid can be kept clamped on the heads of the Chinese people. How long will it be before there is a revival of Buddhism or even Chinese Christianity?

Perhaps the hope of the Christian regarding China is that the genuine drive for equality and justice which has so changed the face of China should issue, in future times, in a relaxed period when the hundred flowers can after all genuinely bloom. For not merely is the problem of individual creativity unsolved, but also Maoism can never unlock the enigmas of death and human suffering, some of which cannot go away, even in an approach to an earthly paradise. But China will always remain a mysterious counterpoint to India's extravagant spirituality in the unfolding of men's search for heaven.

Can I end with verses?

Mao was the mad Hung again
The Taiping rebellion, however,
Was no blood-solution. Never
Would China repair the grey-green willow
And the characters on the scrolls
Till it swam against the red-devil salt billow
With strong arms.

The souls
In Hunan were bitter and rice-blown
But Mao vowed he was not lone
In the grassland and ice
And the caves of Yenan
And on that great day in Peking.

The Bounds of Religion and the Transition from the Tao to Mao

Religion is an important force in human history. We are all agreed upon that. From this simple observation flow vital consequences for the study of religion. We are not perhaps in agreement as to what religion is, but in this lecture I do not wish to go directly into matters of definition. But I do wish to show that our study is expansive in that it needs to consider and indeed comprehend ideologies such as Maoism; and it needs to be bold in its claims to a multidisciplinary status.

Thus to some extent I am chary of the approach of Mircea Eliade, when in *The Quest* and elsewhere he tends to identify the history of religions with a certain kind of phenomenology and when he centres it upon a creative hermeneutic which would interpret spiritual values, both archaic and world-wide, to modern man. His is a noble venture for which he is brilliantly equipped, but it narrows the subject, for it leaves on one side various facets of living religion.

In trying to illustrate the broader, more expansive, way in which the study of religion should develop, I am explicitly asking you to go more on the offensive. We have allowed modern intellectuals too often to be cultured despisers of religion. We have too often had to watch a little helplessly while otherwise intelligent men commit that most insidious fallacy: What I believe to be false cannot be important—coupled often with another: What is unimportant in London or Copenhagen is unimportant.

In order to give flesh to my claims about the expansiveness of our subject, I take the case of modern China, and Maoism in particular. But before getting into that story, let me make one other observation. Our subject is still in its youth. Of course much indeed has been accomplished in the last hundred and fifty years, as Dr. Sharpe's fine new book demonstrates, and there exist today many worthy successors of the giants of the past—men such as Levy-Strauss, Widengren, Eliade, Bianchi and others. But because of the need to integrate so many disciplines and because of remaining uncertainties about method, perhaps the classical period of the study of religion lies in the future. Synthesis is difficult, and few have the powers of a Weber or an Eliade in this respect. So we look forward to a bright future to add to a distinguished, but often groping past. And now to Mao.

Mao's thinking and action have always been close to one another, and therefore, though his theory may be borrowed from the West, its application has been specifically Chinese. Indeed the romantic, bloody and almost miraculous story of his restoration of China's power and dignity is interesting as both a spiritual and material response to the acute practical and intellectual challenges posed to China by a marauding and magically powerful West. It is, incidentally, interesting to contrast the case of India. India's saving ideology was composed of Vedantin and other elements drawn from India's past and given Western dress: Mao's ideology was drawn from the West and given Chinese raiment. Also incidentally, I would remark that some of the insights which can be gained from the study of new religious movements in relatively small-scale societies—a study vigorously being developed by, among other people, Dr. Harold Turner of the University of Aberdeen—can be brought to bear upon other transactions across what may be called the white frontier, including those

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in China and India. By the white frontier I mean the cultural interface between white and to some degree Christian culture on the one hand and other cultures. I do not mean a literal frontier, but a frontier both in spirit and in matter—a frontier where traditional societies need to digest an imported science and other values, and where coca-cola cans are used to decorate dwellings and ritual airfields. This white frontier is white only because Europe had spiritual and material expansiveness during a certain period of human history, so that sea-power, the gun, Galileo and the Bible could make a world-wide impact. This period is of course coming to an end. Now we find there are other important frontiers of a quite different nature developing in the minds and possessions of men. However, let us get to China.

Very often along the frontier you have more than one attempt to solve the problems posed by confrontation of cultures and the breaking up of the challenged culture. It was so in China. It is therefore of great interest to see Maoism in the perspective of the earlier Taiping rebellion. Or maybe we should call it the Taiping revolution. You will doubtless know the story, but let me recapitulate the essentials.

The leader of the Taipings was a Hakka who had some education. Hung had also somewhat briefly come into contact with Christianity. But he failed the civil service examinations twice, and became for this and other reasons embittered with the establishment and the Manchu dynasty in particular. In the aftermath of his disappointment he had a series of visions, and during his trance-like state he found himself commissioned to cast out devils, by a figure he interpreted to be the Father of the Christian trinity who was also his father, and by an elder brother conceived by him to be Christ. Thus he was a visionary and charismatic figure who became the centre and the founder of a new religion. In the wake of the disastrous Opium War, in which Britain enforced its lucrative dope-pushing, Hung raised the flag of revolt. After three years of preparation this revolution began overtly in 1850. Landless peasants, bandits and others joined the new movement, which had its original military base in the mountains of eastern Kwangsi. In 1852, they left this base and marched into Hunan, collecting powerful support, and in 1853 they marched to Nanking, and took it. They never, despite a northern expedition, took Peking. But in 1853 the new dynasty of heavenly peace was installed in Nanking, with Hung as charismatic heavenly emperor.

Hung evolved a new ethic partly derived from Christianity, and partly based on his visionary insight. Property was to be in common. Men and women were to be equal. Land was to be radically redistributed. Temperance was to be observed, and the hated opium to be eschewed. All images were to be destroyed, and China's older religions to be rooted out. The language was to be reformed and brought closer to ordinary speech. A new calendar was to be introduced. Foreigners were to submit to Chinese jurisdiction. The foreshadowing of Mao is striking. And even embarrassing in a way to today's China, which has to interpret the Taiping revolution in its own way.

Because Hung had visions, and because his followers were known as God-worshippers, we have no difficulty in looking upon his movement as religious. Yet at the same time it needed material and historical conditions for its short-lived success. It is impossible to write the history of the Taipings except by combining insights about Hung's personal visions and leadership, the effectiveness of the Taiping ideology, and the engines of revolt provided by cultural and social conditions during the decaying days of the Manchus. The triangle of charisma, ideology and social hunger was the base on which the Taiping revo-

lution was built, and that social hunger itself was a blend of poverty, disintegration, alienation and national spirit. Why then treat Hung as a topic in the history of religions and fail to treat (say) Hitler. He had his own strange inner life, charisma and an ideology. The social hunger of his time was also a blend of economic collapse, disintegration, alienation and above all hurt national pride. You may say that Hung was not evil as Hitler was. But if we get into such value-judgments our historical analysis will become thoroughly clouded. This is one reason why the history of the Nazi period has yet to be written. However, one must accept that Hitler did not display directly the shamanistic and prophetic traits of Hung. But one main message of our study (stressed in his own way by Dr. Frederick Streng in his paper at this Congress) is that religion is multiform. It cannot be shrunk into a single essence. Types of experience types of leadership, types of ritual—and so on—all these vary very widely.

The Taipings failed. Why? Partly they lost their cohesion, for Nanking corrupted their austere morals. Perhaps Saigon is doing the same to the North Vietnamese troops today. Again their military leadership proved to be less than brilliant. But perhaps most significantly of all, their ideology was not fitted for empire, and had too little possible purchase upon the minds of the educated classes. Why is this vital? Both an empire and a church need functionaries who if they are to be effective need a degree of education. If they have this, then their ideology must be plausible. The doctrinal dimension of religion is an important bridge between the vision and the administrative reality. But Hung's theology was a quaint, though initially dynamic, adaptation of Christian ideas. It did not have strong power in the sophistications of China. It failed sufficiently to move hearts through the intellect, a role which doctrine must play.

We may note in this connection one of the reasons for the critical condition of Christianity in some modern societies. In the face of science, Marxism and other intellectual motifs of the modern world, where education has become a big industry, Christian doctrine cannot maintain a sufficiently widespread plausibility. No doubt it is waiting for a Godot in the shape of a new Aquinas. Because of its less than compelling intellectual quality, modern Christianity becomes even at this level, a matter of personal choice. As Oscar Wilde neatly said "Man finds it easy to believe the impossible, but man finds it hard to believe the improbable". At any rate, in the face of the new challenge of the West, and in terms of the older traditions of the Chinese past, the Taiping ideology proved insufficiently dynamic and plausible.

As I have indicated, part of the problem waiting to be solved in 19th and 20th century China was the issue as to how scientific and technological thinking could be incorporated into the fabric of Chinese belief. There were those who thought that it could simply be taken up in a way leaving Chinese ideology and society intact. The slogan of Western science for development and Chinese values for living was, however, not a sound one. To combat the marauding magic of the West, including science, China needed a deeper social reconstruction. In his own intuitive way Hung perceived this, as later did sun Yat-sen and of course Mao. China, then, needed to modernise, and its own resources were inadequate for the new challenge. Let us just look at those spiritual resources briefly.

First, Confucianism had a double disadvantage. First, it was too much bound up with the survival of the old civil service class; and it was precisely this class which had a vested interest in not importing new-style ideas and education from the West. It is not surprising that those reforms which included

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the abolition of the tradition-based civil service examinations heralded the downfall of the Manchu empire. Second, the hierarchic character of Confucianism considered as a system of social ritual did not harmonize with the liberal ideas and ethos thought in the 19th century to be the underlying social basis of science, technology and social development. Moreover, Confucianism of this latter period did not retain much creativity or dynamism. There was to be no neo-Neo-Confucian revival.

As for Buddhism: despite its considerable riches both in philosophy and forms of religious living, it suffered from certain defects as a nationalist and reconstructionist belief-system. Its tendency to otherworldliness in its more devotional forms, such as the Pure Land movement, and its contemplative dimensions, as in Ch'an, were ill-suited to the robust requirements of social transformation and nationalist warfare, which were looming upon China's horizon. Its relatively pacific character was, for the same reasons, a disadvantage. Moreover, Buddhism has always proved surprisingly vulnerable in the face of determined enemies. The monastic base is strength in peace-time and weakness in war.

The third strand in the web of Chinese religious tradition, namely Taoism, had severe drawbacks as an engine of modernization. It is true that it retained a purchase on some of the secret societies which themselves were important in peasant rebellions and therefore ultimately in both the Taiping and Maoist revolutions. But though interesting for its older anarchistic dimension, its forms had become magical and opposed in spirit to the new science. It could not easily appeal to the intellectual, whether the intellectual whose ethos was drenched in Confucianism or the intellectual groping outwards to Western forms of thinking and social action. My emphasis here and elsewhere upon the intellectual is due to the fact that any revolution in China to be effective had to have a spiritual and doctrinal outreach and direction, and this needed mainly to be articulated for obvious reasons by intellectuals. Indeed, it is a truism that Mao's successes were not only due to his brilliant generalship and hardiness in adversity but also to the direction in which he challenged the revolutionary social hunger of the ordinary Chinese who lived and fought with him. To use the power of the gun you need the material aspect—the cartridge, the bullet, the gun itself; but you need the mental or spiritual aspect—the aim and the reasoning behind the aim. So Taoism was ill-suited to the new tasks, and even if it were to be refined by a rediscovery of origins through the *Tao-teh-Ching*, a philosophy of non-action was scarcely relevant it seemed to the overwhelming spiritual and material problems besetting Chinese civilization.

In brief the older resources of China's brilliant tradition were not equal to the new strains put upon China. However, there were other factors favourable to the required transformation, even if in their bones the Chinese could not believe in foreign civilization. Incidentally, the Japanese had been used to cultural imports from China, and were better adapted to cope with Western technology, which they so brilliantly also imported and reorganised. China was however too smug, too huge, too refined. One is reminded of Britain too, in its present post-imperial phase, relatively impervious to foreign ideas.

But one factor favourable to transformation was the resentment at the Manchus, still looked on as a foreign dynasty, for they had of course leaped the Great Wall in grabbing power in China. Thus the Taipings insisted on the discarding of pigtails and growing hair on the front part of the head (shaved off by Manchu custom). They were thus sometimes nicknamed the 'long-haired'

ones. Perhaps it is a nice coincidence or a little joke by Providence that Mao's name means Hair. The unpopularity of the Manchus meant that the first Chinese revolution of 1911 could gain popular support. And even if Sun Yat-sen's dreams of a balanced republican constitution blending eastern and western political and social values were to prove to be illusory, the mood generated was one of new hope.

Why was it however that it was to be a Chinese form of Marxism which was to provide the aim behind the Chinese trigger of national aspiration? Of course, it was due to discipline, a theory of history relevant to the colonial epoch, a good adaptation to Chinese realities, military luck and brilliance, and I shall have a bit more to say about these matters. But it is useful to look more closely at the beliefs and values which Mao and the Reds brought to bear, and their relationship to the values and urges of the Chinese tradition. I shall arrange my thoughts under this head by seeing Maoism as an ideology or religion which could do two things. First it could provide an analogous function to the old religions. Second, it could provide content reversal. Reversal of content was a necessity for transformation, but it could not work without the analogy of function. Let us then begin with the latter in relation to the old traditions.

Confucianism had its elite governed by an ethic and a system of knowledge (the Classics). Maoism had its party members and cadres and a new puritanism, together with a new practical set of doctrines, as found in the thought of Marx-Lenin-Mao.

Buddhism appealed to the devotional fervour of the masses, partly because of its otherworldly promises and the prestige of its institutional holy men, the monks. Maoism appeals to a new Pure Land, not to the West (though somewhat what from the West) which is to be found here on earth in the East. It uses a type of devotional fervour, but to other than traditional ends. Incidentally, it is important to recognise that in a period of transition and social transformation the atoms of society do not swim along in the easy currents of thought and value imposed by a stable matrix. Rather the atoms need a new dynamic and a new glue to fasten them together in new configurations. That glue is supplied by an evangelical-type commitment. Disintegration is the herald of evangelicism, as is well evidenced in the Maoist saga. Regarding Taoism: its anarchic elements enter into the cultural revolution in its peasant-based desires for the overthrow of an oppressive system. Even if Taoism's magic is rejected, the desire for a new magic and a new secret of immortality is reflected in the way the charisma of Mao and the numinosity of technology are used. The miracles of Mao are in the tradition of the later Tao.

But if functions are taken over by the new ideology, the contents are on the whole reversed. Against the hierarchic character of Confucianism, there is a new and somewhat aggressive egalitarianism. It is no surprise that the dunce's cap should have been used to uproot dignity; nor is it a surprise that the enemy in recent times should be represented as Confucius. He is the symbol of the old order which is now reversed in the interests of a reconstructed China. Again in the style of content reversal, there is a rejection of the cult of ancestors. The past is replaced by the future. The authoritative spirits of the new China are the spirits of the future. Against the old Heaven there is the people. Indeed Mao fairly explicitly makes the equation in one or two of his poems and elsewhere. So the mandate of heaven so-called becomes the mandate of the people. Again, in place of the old emperor is the new charismatic figure, the Chairman. His thoughts become the new thoughts, a democratized version of the new classics

(Marx, Lenin, Mao) replacing the old classical texts. But even these works are not to be studied too much, for excess of poring over books is decried by Mao. He said that one should not even read all the works of Marx. On the whole Mao opposes science to literature. If one element of the new canon is Maoism, the other is the application of scientific thinking, but of course in a Chinese context. And as for the older arts, whether painting or opera, new values are brought into being. The realism of idealistic pictures of Mao at the Lushan pass or other scenes—this is a conscious rejection of the older Chinese aestheticism. There are traces of it left, but on the whole the emphasis is on heavy foregrounds, heroic moulds, rather than the ethereal character of much of earlier Chinese art, especially that which has been under the influence of the Tao and of Ch'an.

Regarding Buddhism different motifs come into play. The contemplative aspect of Buddhism finds its opposition in the strong emphasis upon practical action in the thought of Mao. Its pacifism is replaced by a rather aggressive militarism—of course a militarism in the service of a cause. We should not forget that Mao's apophthegm about power growing out of the barrel of a gun was uttered in the context of the need for party control over the army machine. The rifle of militarism is aimed by the eye of ideology. Against the other-worldly ideal of the Pure Land there is China, almost numinously captured in one of Mao's poems, where he writes:

Mountains dance like silver snakes,
hills gallop like wax bright elephants,
trying to climb over the sky.

And again in the same poem interestingly:

Genghis Khan, man of his age
and favoured by heaven,
knew only how to hunt the great eagle.
Such emperors are all gone.
Only today are we men of feeling.

And against the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation or rebirth there is a new type of solidarity, between men today and the future achievements which reflect upon the meaningfulness of life and of present endeavour. In opposition to the individualism of the no-self doctrine there is the collectivism of the no-class doctrine. Against spiritual forces there lie material processes (though ones that have a spiritual aspect, in their way and in accordance with Marx and Mao). And a new philosophy replaces the older sophistications: Marx looms where the Buddha once serenely held his presence.

Content reversal in regard to the Tao takes the following form. Against the heavenly forces one finds earthly ones. In regard to the magical quest for immortality a new kind of acceptance of the heroic dimension beyond death emerges. Again to quote one of Mao's poems, regarding the death of his wife and the wife of a colleague, he writes:

I lost my proud poplar and you your willow.
As poplar and willow they soar straight into the ninth heaven
And ask the prisoner in the moon Wu Kang what is there.
He offers them wine from the cassia tree.

The anarchistic non-action philosophy of early Taoism is replaced by a robust espousal of action and war as means to the end of the social justice and peace. Against the magic there is scientific Marxism.

One could go on. But it is indeed possible to discern in all this some of the elements of contrast in content between the older philosophies and religions and the perhaps brash new product of Maoism, to prove so effective in the reconstruction of China.

The first main lesson I would learn from this brief account of some of the reasons for Maoism's success in China is that it is both continuous and discontinuous with the older traditions which we recognise as being religious in principle (and so liable to appear in textbooks and on syllabuses of students in our universities). The discontinuity is hardly greater however than that between given religions in the traditional mode. For example Theravada Buddhism eschews the creation and a god to be worshipped monotheistically. Its focus is amazingly different from that of (say) Islam. Islam and Buddhism are to that extent discontinuous, but no more so than (say) Christianity or Buddhism on the one hand and Maoism on the other. In short the bounds of religion need to be continuously revised and so extended beyond what is laid down by the conventional wisdom.

The second main lesson which I would adduce is that it is somewhat naive to think of Maoism as essentially materialistic. A continuous motif in Mao's thought is that the mental or spiritual aspect is important whether in war or agriculture. Indeed he thinks of it really as paramount. But as always the spiritual need material representation to have force, or rather something more than representation, namely expression. The spiritual controls the material world through expressing itself materially. This is similar to the traditional religious poses in regard to icons, texts, rituals and other concretisations of the invisible.

But it might be objected that Mao rejects the invisible in the sense in which I have been using the term. My only reply is that the interplay of contradictions within the bosom of matter and in the ongoing structures and flows of history are just as invisible as the actions of the older numina. The gods acted their ideas out in the human world: so too do the forces analysed by Marxism—but in the latter case we get into greater abstractions and less of the personal flavours associated with much of polytheism and indeed monotheism. But the fact that Maoism is more abstract in this sense should not bar its being treated analogously to a religion. After all the Tao was not a person, but more a principle or a pervading spirit. So if ancient Taoism can be treated religiously, so also modern Maoism. Perhaps we can sum up the invisibility as it were of the forces to which Mao appeals through a quotation: he writes "When we look at a thing, we must examine its essence and treat its appearance as an usher at the threshold". Again he writes: "The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal: it lies in the contradiction within the thing". Metaphysics, but a this-worldly kind, and also oriented to the future. Heaven on earth, and the future instead of the past—such is the glowing and metaphysical vision prepared for the following of Mao. Hence it is absurd to put Maoism in one basket and Taoism in another, or Christianity here and the Theravada there.

Another interesting contrast within Mao's thinking is typical of religions of a more traditional kind. Thus Mao combines a sense of destiny with a heavy emphasis upon a sort of voluntarism. Thus he can write on the one hand as follows::

"The socialist system will eventually replace the capitalist system: this is an objective law independent of man's will". But on the other hand, Lin Piao could write, in the preface of the Little Red Book: "Once Mao Tse-tung's thought is grasped by the broad masses, it becomes an inexhaustible source of strength and a spiritual atom bomb of infinite power". Permeating Mao's writings is the thought that determination and commitment can move mountains. Indeed one of his parables is to that effect. In his use of the story of the Foolish Old Man who removed the Mountain he identified God (who really did the job in the last analysis according to the traditional version which Mao adapted) with the people.

In brief Mao stresses the importance of mental and spiritual forces in the struggle and is not a technological materialist. He may be an atheist, but he perceives newer invisible powers at work in the world and in human history.

In brief the materialism of Mao is ideal. It is not a flat positivism. And in its embodiment as a force in human history it has a certain plausibility, a kind of persuasion which leads men to their own idealisms, even if as a philosophy it is not to be regarded, from Mao's point of view, as idealistic.

For the reasons I have explained, by analogy of function and content reversal, Maoism has succeeded in modern China. It is one of the most impressive mental engines of change in recent history. And because of its character it is hard to deny that the historian of religion, or more broadly the student of religion, who deals with religion in its multi-dimensional aspects, must have much to learn from and then to say about the new Tao.

But Maoism like religions weds theory and practice, doctrine and ritual, myth and ethics and so forth. It integrates what should be with what is. This wedding is one which is celebrated throughout the great religions. So one conclusion I would draw about the bounds of religion is that we should break those bounds if they are conventional. Our field stretches beyond the conventional fences.

The second main lesson which I would learn from this matter is that it is highly inadequate, to say the least, just to select themes as a way of dealing with the spiritual forces operative in the world. This is the path of pure phenomenology. But the themes have purchase on the world through people—so we are committed to see how they work from the point of view of historical, doctrinal, psychological, social and other forces. The tendrils of myth stretch inexorably and strongly into practice. I think the myth and ritual approach is a staging house to a strongly integrated view of theory and practice in religion and ideology.

The third main lesson which I would derive from this excursion into China is that we cannot define religion in an essentialist manner. Varieties of religious object and response are legion. I believe here in a Wittgensteinian family-resemblance theory of definition. If one abandons essentialism there can be no reason why one should not extend the history of religions beyond its conventional and traditional moulds.

So let us be more expansive in our claims about the study of religion. We should not let it collapse into the constrictions of piety and individual belief as typical of a marginal force. Not only is religion an important factor in human history: it is wider than we think. Why not Tao-ology or Dharmology?

Long live the history of religions and ideologies, therefore. And to end, a poem:

Mao was the mad Hung again.
The Taiping rebellion however
Was no blood-solution. Never
Would China repair the grey-green willow
And the characters on the scrolls
Till it swam against the red-devil salt billow
With strong arms. The souls
In Hunan were bitter and rice-blown
But Mao vowed he was not lone
In the grassland and ice
And in the caves of Yenan
And on that great day in Peking.

NINIAN SMART

Myth and Transcendence¹

The aim of this paper is to analyze the notion of transcendence, as it occurs in the context of theism. The analysis serves some important purposes.

First, it is relevant to the problem of demythologizing. This latter project, which in effect is a way of re-presenting Christianity without the lumber of a prescientific cosmology, presupposes that we are reasonably clear about what it is the myths were 'really' getting at. For example, the three-decker view of the cosmos as found in the Jewish and Christian scriptures does not correspond to how the cosmos literally is; but does this mean that the idea of God's being 'up there' was not pointing to something else? The way we demythologize will be determined by the way we conceive this something else. For Bultmann, there is Heidegger. But the purpose of this paper is to analyse transcendence in such a way that demythologizing is possible without prior commitment to a metaphysical system, even if the idea of transcendence is itself in a loose sense a 'metaphysical' one (in that loose sense in which a claim which is incompatible with positivistic empiricism can be dubbed metaphysical). Religious concepts do not have their principal roots in philosophizing, so that an analysis of transcendence should not depend on some particular philosophical viewpoint.

Second, it happens that since the war there have been some supposed analyses of Christian belief (e.g., those of R. B. Braithwaite² and Paul van Buren³) which dispense with the notion of a transcendent being. These analyses concede too much to a this-worldly empiricism to make sense of traditional theistic claims. Because of

¹ A version of this paper was read at the American Philosophical Association (Western Division), April 1965, and I am grateful for the points put by the respondents, Professors Gareth Mathews and Alvin Plantinga.

² R. B. Braithwaite, *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955).

³ Paul van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (London: 1963).

epistemological difficulties about the verification or falsification of religious statements, it is tempting to reduce the claims of religion. But this distorts analysis. The present investigation may be useful in bringing out something of the nature of traditional ontology. In this sense it is just concerned with analysis. How we know whether there is or is not a transcendent being is a different issue.

Third, a clarification of the idea of transcendence may serve a purpose *within* Christianity. The existence of divergent religious and theological viewpoints within Christianity may be important, but there is no reason to suppose that there is not an implied substantial agreement about the transcendence of God.

This last point needs expansion. Broadly, the chief theological divergences are epistemological rather than ontological. Roughly, Christian theologians belong to four classes generated by a pair of independent epistemological divergences. They differ about the possibility of natural theology, and they differ about the nature of revelation. Thus we may distinguish first, between those theologians, such as Bultmann, John Robinson and the Neo-Thomists, who in differing ways draw on ideas outside revelation to interpret and defend the Christian faith, and second, Barth and most evangelicals who in differing ways reject such 'liberalism'. The two positions can be conveniently dubbed the 'liberal' and the 'revelationist' respectively. Secondly, religious people are divided over their method of treating the Bible. For some, the truths of Christianity can be deduced from the sentences of the Bible. For others, the latter are a record of revelatory events, but are not themselves revelation. People of widely differing traditions are found in each of these camps. The former school can be dubbed the 'deductivists' and the latter the 'inductivists'.

These two polarities yield the four classes: liberal deductivists (e.g., many Roman Catholic theologians); liberal inductivists (e.g., Robinson and Bultmann); revelationist inductivists (e.g., Barth); and revelationist deductivists (e.g., Conservative Evangelicals). Now no doubt these epistemological divergences yield different conclusions, often, about particular matters of theology and conduct. No doubt, too, some of these positions are more acceptable to sensitively rational persons than others. But the divergences will not affect the present analysis of transcendence, for the following reasons. First, I hope to show (briefly) that the Bible implies a doctrine of tran-

scendence, and all the above parties are agreed on the necessary importance of the scriptures. Second, the liberal position may involve the importation of Greek, Existentialist, Whiteheadian or other forms of metaphysics into theology, but the present analysis is not committed to any such system. Third, the analysis does not imply anything essentially controversial about how we arrive at belief in the transcendent. The only points where it touches on epistemology are where epistemological doctrines, such as positivistic empiricism, rule out Christian faith a priori.

We need to be realistic about religious belief. If some may find the idea of a transcendent being intellectually unattractive, there is yet no point in watering it down. Religious language is what it is, and there is no need to apologize for it. Apologetics follows after.

A further point before we start. This analysis is concerned with theism, and with Christianity in particular. Other remarks would have to be made about the transcendence of nirvana, etc. It is extremely important for philosophical analysis not to confine itself, in a culturally tribalistic way, to the religion of the environment of the practitioners. But there are advantages in delimiting the present enquiry to theism. In any case, religious doctrinal schemes are organic,⁴ and a particular notion of transcendence has to be taken in its context, if we are to attain a reasonably rich understanding of it.

Since 'transcends' is a transitive verb, it is as well to consider the important grammatical objects which it takes. As we shall see, one of these, 'the world', is more important than the others, and it is this sort of transcendence that this paper will chiefly concern. But let us consider the following sentences:

- (1) 'God transcends space and time';
- (2) 'God transcends the world';
- (3) 'God transcends human experience';
- (4) 'God transcends thought';
- (5) 'God transcends existence'.

The first and second are what principally interest us here, but some brief and fundamental remarks about the others are in order.

(3) If we say that God transcends human experience, in the religious context, we cannot mean that he is beyond all possible

⁴ As argued for in my *Reasons and Faiths* (London: 1958), p. 12.

human experience. It is axiomatic that the believer thinks that he has or can have some experience of God (in prayer, through revelation, etc.). A God who could never enter into human experience would *a fortiori* have no interpersonal relations with men. This would be flatly contrary both to the Christian revelation and to the beliefs of other theistic faiths.

(4) Similar remarks apply to the notion that God is beyond comprehension or that he transcends thought. There would be a contradiction in saying that he is *totally* incomprehensible. For the very term 'God' incapsulates a number of assertions that the believer is prepared to make about him. By 'God' the Christian, for instance, means 'the creator of the world', 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ', and so on. To say that he is totally incomprehensible is to withdraw any basis or sense from these affirmations. An unknowable *X* has as much to do with atheism as with religion and as much to do with my right foot as with anything else in human history.

The remarks of this paragraph might be denied by one who held that religious utterances are never cognitive, except when about 'neat' historical events, such as the execution of Jesus. If 'God is creator of the world' merely expresses joy, awe, and a 'positive' evaluation of nature, then 'God is incomprehensible' might be *just* a way of saying that the search for descriptive truth about God is useless and vain. The noncognitivist analysis of religious utterances can be extremely revealing in showing the performative, expressive and other aspects of religious language. But it does not correspond, in one vital respect, with the intentions of users of religious language: men worship, and would not conceive it to be justified if there were nothing to worship. The activity presupposes something about reality.

(5) 'God transcends existence'—to say this is a way of showing that God is not a finite being, like a star. Yet it is a paradoxical thing to say. What it can scarcely mean is that, by transcending existence, God does not exist. To assert this is to assert the thesis of atheism. Since, notoriously, there are difficulties about treating 'existent' as though it stands for some kind of property, and about treating 'existence' as though it stands for either a property or a substance, it is highly obscure as to how we can decently interpret (5). Suffice it to say that the analysis of transcendence here pre-

sented should make it clear that God is *not* something like a star.⁵ Nor is he, for the believer, an entity additional to the furniture of the world: for the believer's universe already includes God.

We may now turn to the more crucial cases.

(1) I shall content myself with God's transcendence of space, and leave the matter of time out of account (for there may be a genuine option as to whether we are to think of God as timeless or not; but he can scarcely, on any account, be properly thought of as a spatial being).

To say that God transcends space can be put in another way (in accordance with the analogy implied by 'trans-'), as follows: 'God is outside or beyond space'. This, of course, is a paradox, for 'outside' and 'beyond' are themselves spatial words. If a rose is outside the kitchen, it occupies a bit of space other than that occupied by the kitchen.

A minimal interpretation of 'outside space' is that God does not take spatial predicates like 'is a thousand feet long' or 'is to the north of Upper Volta'. In this respect God is like numbers. But of course the believer believes that God exists, is powerful and so on; while one would have to be mesmerized by philosophy to think of numbers as existing in such a sense (though, trivially, we do have a use for sentences like 'There is only one prime number between 13 and 19'). This is why it is not enough to interpret God's transcendence as just meaning nonspatiality. We must go further.

But meanwhile it might be objected that God *does* take spatial predicates, if the scriptures are anything to go by. Was God not on the holy mountain? The Bible seems to be full of such spatial language about God. The reply to this objection has two phases. First, the Bible also speaks of God as creator of the whole world. This implies the existence of God either temporally or logically prior to the existence of spatio-temporal objects. Second, the Bible and some

⁵ This evidently is Paul Tillich's fear, when people talk of God's existence. Thus in D. Mackenzie Brown, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (London: 1965), p. 88, Tillich is recorded as saying: "We can no longer speak of God easily to anybody because he will immediately question, 'Does God exist?' Now the very asking of the question signifies that the symbols of God have become meaningless. For God, in the question, has become one of innumerable objects in time and space which may or may not exist. And this is not the meaning of God at all." It is part of the burden of the present paper that it need not be the meaning of 'exists'.

other religious documents certainly speak as though God is specially present or specially active at particular places and times. Without this particularity there would, it seems, be no revelatory events or experiences, and God would be a mere nonspatial First Cause. But the idea of special presence (on the holy mountain or wherever) does not necessarily conflict with that of God's nonspatiality, and does account for the spatial language used of God. We shall return to this point later.

Why do we feel that there is more to God's transcendence than his nonspatiality? One reason may be that we tacitly identify space with the extent of the world. Already we are passing to case (2) : 'God transcends the world'.

Here, however, there are ambiguities, which need to be cleared up. 'The world' is an expression of multifarious meanings. Some of these are philosophically rather uninteresting, such as 'the world, the flesh, and the devil'. More exciting is 'the world of Paul Slickey': for it is possible to erect a relational concept of the world, such that a person's world is, roughly, what he is related to in experience. Such a 'world' does not exist before he does, though the past may come to enter into his experience.

But *this* sense of 'the world' is not, after all, very useful for our purposes. For to say that God is beyond my world, though perhaps true, is to put him in a class that he may not necessarily care to belong to. For Khruschev and Vittorio de Sica are beyond my world, at least in so far as their world is different from mine.

Nor do we want to mean by 'the world' in this context the totality of all entities. For if God were beyond the universe in this sense, he would not exist.

It is much more natural and useful to use the phrase to mean 'the cosmos'. It is in line with traditional usage. Though the Hebrew cosmology may have been primitive and inaccurate, there was the notion of a universe created by God. In this respect, the doctrine of transcendence is not radically altered (or even altered at all) by changes in astronomical knowledge.

We can deduce from the element of nonspatiality, which was detected as being one part of the notion of transcendence, that God does not lie beyond the furthest galaxy or behind the sun. To understand what it means to say that God is 'beyond' or 'behind'

the cosmos, we must note the other elements included in, or closely related to, the idea of transcendence.

First, theism, where it is imaginatively and vitally held, implies that God is invisibly present everywhere. He is, as it were, concealed all about us. This recognition of concealment has its converse in the idea of revelation, figured as a kind of unveiling of God by himself.

This element of concealment or 'secret omnipresence', as I shall call it, accounts in part for God's being thought to be 'behind the cosmos' and being (more intimately) behind the things and events which we encounter, and which form part of the fabric of the cosmos. That God is thought of as secret or invisible also implies, in line with his nonspatiality, that, just as he is not beyond the furthest galaxy, he is likewise not within things in the way in which particles are. He is not smaller than the electron, etc.

The next element to be considered may not strictly be part of the notion of transcendence; but it is impossible to divorce it from transcendence without distorting the meaning of the latter. It is the idea that God is specially present in certain events and experiences, often of an unusual character. In brief, a transcendent God is otiose unless he reveals himself through particular circumstances. This is not to say that God is not in some sense omnipresent. It is not to deny that the continuous practice of the presence of God is possible. But this practice seems logically to depend on the prior recognition of a particular revelation. Consider Dostoevski's seeing of Christ in his fellow convicts in Siberia. The very use of the word 'Christ' presupposes a recognition of Christ, i.e., the Christ incarnate in particular circumstances. It might be replied that I am here slipping into mere epistemology: we would not know God anywhere unless we first found him somewhere.

The reply to this is that the concept of special revelation (say in Christ) implies some sort of special activity or relation of God. Thus the Christ of the New Testament stands in some kind of identity relation to the Father. It is not just that Jesus manifests the work of God in a preeminent way—the way an orchid or a saint might, only more so—but rather it is also that Jesus *is* God. Thus there is an ontological aspect in the idea that God is specially present here rather than there.

Yet it might be further objected that though the notion of

special revelation or manifestation may imply an ontological aspect—e.g., God's special causal activity—nevertheless the argument for the importance of such special activity is epistemological. The objection is right in pointing to the danger of dressing up an argument as an analysis. However, the idea of transcendence is everywhere *in religion* associated with that of a being or state accessible to human experience through particular events or experiences.

The third element, then, is that of special presence. Clearly this element needs further explanation, but for the time being it is convenient to go on to the other main aspects of theistic transcendence. (To recapitulate, we have nonspatiality, secret omnipresence and special presence.)

The notion that God is 'beyond' or 'behind' or 'outside' the cosmos implies or suggests that the cosmos and God are different. This in turn implies that one could exist without the other. Thus we can analyse the God-cosmos difference by enunciating the two propositions: 'Even if the cosmos did not exist, God might exist' and 'Even if God did not exist, the cosmos might exist'. In practice, however, we are not concerned with mere possibilities, but rather with real independence. Thus the notion of transcendence in its theistic context goes with the belief that God is Creator. This implies that even if the cosmos did not exist, God would; but it does not imply the converse. On the contrary, the theist believes that if God did not exist, the cosmos would not (would not have). Yet this is a bare and incomplete way of stating the implication of 'beyondness' or 'behindness', for it is compatible with a deistic conception of creation. Rather, the theist would say that the dependence of the world is continuous; or, in other terms, God is continuously the creator and sustainer of the cosmos. This element can be dubbed the 'creativity' element. Thus we have two further aspects of transcendence: creativity and independence.

It may be noted that the thesis that God would exist even if the cosmos did not is compatible with God's logical contingency. It remains conceivable that God might not exist. But I am not here concerned to propound any metaphysical doctrine concerning the necessity or otherwise of God's existence. The formulation given above is neutral in this respect. It might be complained that the contingency of God would make trouble for the Cosmological Argument. This is beside the point here, since I am concerned with

analysis or description, rather than with apologetics or metaphysical argument. (Though, incidentally, the contingency of God need not destroy the Cosmological Argument.)⁶

Transcendence then comprises, or is only intelligible by reference to, five elements: nonspatiality, secret omnipresence, special presence, independence and creativity. The abandonment of this notion makes nonsense of traditional Christian belief. If God is spatial, science would offer the best key to his understanding, rather than faith. If he is not omnipresent and continuously creative, he becomes an unmysterious deistic being. If he is not independent, either he is a product of the cosmos or identical with it (or with a part of it). If he is not specially present, he cannot be in Christ or speaking through prophets, etc.

But it is not enough to list the elements. We must show that they are compatible and that they hang together.

Regarding compatibility, it is unfortunate that there is a rather large number of possible contradictions to consider. For the purpose of considering them, let us alphabetize the elements thus: let 'N' stand for nonspatiality, 'O' for secret omnipresence, 'P' for special presence, 'I' for independence and 'C' for creativity. We can generate the following questions:

Is *N* compatible with *O*? (More briefly) *NO*? Then (in the same style) : *NP*? *NI*? *NC*? *OP*? *OI*? *OC*? *PI*? *PC*? *IC*?

Let us deal with some of the easier issues first. It seems clear that the notion of creativity on the part of God is not merely compatible with his independence, but actually entails it. Thus the answer to *IC*? is 'Yes'. It follows that if the answer to *OC*? is 'Yes' (in brief, *OC*), then *OI*.

Further, the notion of God's secret omnipresence can be understood in relation to his continuous activity in events. Hence, we can assert *OC*, and hence, also *OI*. Thus, if the answer to *NC*? is 'Yes', we can assert *NI* and *NO*. We may thus single out *NC*? as one of the key questions.

This leaves *NP*? , *PC*? , *PI*? and *OP*? to be dealt with. Here again we can simplify. From our results so far, we can infer that if *PC*, then *PI* and *OP*. And if *NC* and *PC*, then it seems unlikely that

⁶ For reasons which I advance in *Philosophers and Religious Truth* (London: 1964), Chapter III.

there should be an incompatibility between nonspatiality and special presence. Consequently, *NC?* and *PC?* are the crucial questions.

First, then, is nonspatiality compatible with God's creativity? We could fill out this question by asking whether something analogous to a causal relation can be held to obtain between a state or thing which does not take spatial predicates and one which does. We are certainly aware of a familiar kind of experience where this seems to be so: my memory of a bad thing I have done can enter into the explanation of why I am blushing (or better, of why these cheeks have turned redder). Now it might be replied that my memory depends on spatio-temporal events or objects, and that it only has a proper place as belonging to a spatio-temporal person. But I am only here concerned to show that we already work with concepts where a nonspatial event enters into the account of why spatio-temporal events occur. (There is here no need of advocating dualism, which tends to assimilate the nonspatial to the spatial.) Given that we can make use of such modes of explanation, we cannot a priori rule out the notion of a nonspatial creator. Thus we have no a priori reason to deny *NC*.

Second, the personal analogy is also useful in treating *PC?*. If God is active everywhere, how can he be more active in revelation than elsewhere? It does not seem plausible to think of his making a greater effort here rather than there. Now, however, it is a perfectly intelligible notion that I should be more *engaged* in one activity rather than another. If I stop digging the vegetable plot to play cricket with my boy, I am more engaged in the latter activity than the former: it reveals more of my interests and concerns. I am not here suggesting that God is bored by his routine creativity: I only wish to show that there can be different degrees of self-revelation or engagement. Hence, it is plausible to argue that *PC*.

Hence it would seem that there is no special reason to deny that the notion of transcendence, as here analysed, is self-contradictory. But are the different elements coherent? Do they have some kind of 'internal' relationship? Do they suggest one another?

Before going on to this, let me make a point about the personal analogy. It hints that God may stand to the world as the mind to the body. Put thus, the idea is full of traps. But there remains an important point to this suggestion, brought out well in the theology

of Rāmānuja. He explicitly compared the God-world relationship to that of soul to body; but he gave an odd definition of 'body'—as that which is instrumental to the soul.⁷ Thus the world is regarded as totally instrumental to God's purposes. This made his doctrine typically theistic. But at the same time Rāmānuja had a strong sense of the dynamic unity of the world and God. This is important, because talk of transcendence is sometimes criticized as involving a dualistic world view, as though there are two separate 'worlds'. On the contrary, theists can see the 'two worlds' as a single dynamic complex. Miracles thus are not interventions in a fixed order, for the order consists both of the transcendent world and this world, in the closest possible creative relationship. Thus transcendence need not imply a myth of God as the tinkering mechanic.

Are the elements coherent? We can approach this problem by a consideration of types of religious experience (though other approaches are possible). We can distinguish firstly those experiences which are thought of by the subject as being in some way 'direct' experiences of God; and secondly those where God's presence or activity is seen in things or persons, etc.—as when God may be seen providentially at work in history, or displaying his glory in a sunset or tempest. It is the first type of experience—of a prophet like Isaiah or of a contemplative mystic like St Teresa—which concerns me specially here; not because the second type is unimportant (it is vital for those who believe in sacraments), but because the first type pinpoints some of the more dramatic instances where God is (supposedly) known by acquaintance.

Now the numinous, prophetic experience of Jeremiah or Isaiah, or indeed of Paul on the road to Damascus, involves a powerful sense of the difference between the individual and God. Out of this, and round this, there comes the awe which is expressed in worship and adoration. Any doctrine of the identity of the soul and God conflicts with this sense of otherness. Thus God's independence fits in with this type of experience, which is itself conceived as a form of special presence. In addition the dynamism of the

⁷ See my *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* (London: G. Allen and Unwin 1964; New York: Humanities Press, 1964), Chapter VIII.

prophetic experience suggests God's powerful creativity. The sense of dependence can easily be projected onto the cosmic environment.

Typically, too, contemplative mysticism involves an experience distinguishable from perception, thinking, remembering, etc. It is void of that content which has its habitat in space. Thus such experiences suggest elements in the doctrine of transcendence. The nonspatiality of God is hinted at too in the prophetic experience, for the latter is like the unveiling of what is hidden by spatio-temporal objects, and lies beyond the symbols and appearances (as with Isaiah in the Temple) by which the sense of the presence of God is expressed. It is not irrelevant that in the sacraments too God is conceived of as present, though unseen.

Thus the notion of special presence ties in with the independence, creativity and nonspatiality of God. Likewise creativity implies independence, and suggests omnipresence. It also implies nonspatiality, for otherwise God would be a candidate for being part of the created cosmos.

These are some of the ways in which there is an inner connection between the different elements in the full idea of transcendence. It remains to see whether this idea is in fact found in theistic religion. It is convenient to treat this by reference to a few examples from the Bible, though it would be possible also to use other scriptures and religious writings as evidence.

First, is the God of the Bible really nonspatial? Is not God in heaven, and is not heaven above, in the Hebrew cosmology? But it should be noted that there is great ambiguity about God's location: "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven . . .," as Psalms 11:4 says. This does not simply express the crude idea that God is in two different places at once, or that he has left his throne to dwell in the temple. The paradox of such language need not be taken as a contradiction; i.e., it need not be taken literally. Secondly, in the creation narrative in Genesis, God is represented as bringing all things (including heaven) into existence. This implies something about God's 'real' location. Third, where God withdraws his presence and is "afar off," this signifies alienation, as in Psalms 27:9: "Hide not thy face from me. Turn not thy servant away in anger." These points may show, by way of example, that there is no need to think of the God of the Bible as essentially spatial or localizable.

It will need little argument to show that the Old Testament evolved a conception of God's creativity and continued activity. Thus we can infer also that the elements of independence and omnipresence are Biblical. Finally, the element of special presence—God's revelatory operation here and there—is so central a feature of the Biblical narrative that this point needs no labouring. We can conclude, therefore, that the idea of transcendence as here analysed corresponds to what is found in actual religion.

Finally, how does transcendence relate to immanence? If one treats the latter term simply as special presence, the contrast between transcendence and immanence can be stated as the contrast between *N*, *O*, *I* and *C*, on the one hand, and *P* on the other. But equally, we can mean by immanence God's working within all things. In this case the concept becomes identical with that of transcendence, for 'within' is an analogy like 'beyond—not to be taken literally: who is to say that 'within' and 'beyond' point in different directions? And God's dynamic working within all things is surely equivalent to his continuous, omnipresent creativity. One thus has two choices about immanence: immanence₁ is just *P*; immanence₂ is just transcendence.

Yet mythologically and psychologically transcendence so often is wrongly thought of as though God is afar off. This is no doubt a disadvantage in using the term. What the theist means can, in terms of the present analysis, be put as follows: "There is a holy Power working within and behind the cosmos, present to us secretly everywhere, and specially present and active in such-and-such events and/or experiences."

This is what theism means, however its language may be wrapped in myth; but it is a further, and quite different, question as to how we know the belief in a transcendent and immanent being is true.

NINIAN SMART

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND

CHAPTER 12

Islamic Responses to the West

Symbolically the date 1798 is highly meaningful in the relations between Islam and the West. It was, of course, the date of Napoleon's spectacular invasion of Egypt. It was significant for three reasons at least. First, it showed the alarming superiority of Western organization and military power. Second, it seemed to indicate that this power was based on new forms of knowledge. Islam had in the old days been superior, so Muslims were confident, to Christendom in intellectual and practical powers. This new knowledge centered on science and applied science or technology. Not for nothing did Napoleon bring a cloud of savants with him whose magisterial probing of Egyptian life was reported in the monumental *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1812). This opened a window on Egypt for Europeans: but its existence and mode of creation made an impression of modernity on Egyptian intellectuals in subsequent years. Third, Napoleon's invasion was striking, because he came relatively close to the heartlands of Islam. It was one thing for Islam to be pushed back in Spain long ago, or more recently in the Balkans, but this was different and displayed the power of modern naval technology among Europeans. For Muslims the old order was threatened.

It was an ominous prelude to later occupations – by the British in Egypt, from 1882 to 1922; by the French in Algeria (1830) and Tunisia (1881); by the Italians in Libya (1911) and the ultimate collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, with French and British protectorates imposed on most of the Arab world to the North and East of Egypt. Moreover beyond, there was colonization of all of Islamic Africa and Central, South East and other parts of Asia where Islam was strong.¹ Virtually all of the Muslim world was therefore due to be subdued and carved up by European powers within about a hundred and twenty-five years of Napoleon's intrusion. All this was, to say the least, disturbing to Muslims. For more conservative ulema perhaps it was less disturbing, but for others it raised important questions, which became clearer as Western-style education spread. That itself became something inevitable, independently of occupation.

The argument, relevant to all colonized nations and those under threat from European domination, could be very crudely stated as follows: behind European military and naval domination lay technological prowess. This prowess in turn rested on scientific education. And so in order to be able to resist the West, Western forms of education had to be introduced. The payoff of science was guns. This was the first major stage in the argument.

Sometimes a second step was taken: behind science and modern armies lay democratic constitutions and an open ordering of society. Not everyone would take this step. If Muslims stayed with the first it was thought possible to graft scientific education onto

traditional social forms. If they went to the second step, then some kind of modernism was needed – a blend of traditional social values and the new ideas from the West. We shall later explore how such options were exploited. But the Napoleonic and later incursions also brought another force into the region, namely nationalism. This had somewhat puzzling aspects to it, later in the 19th and 20th Centuries, for what was the national entity supposed to be? Was it Egypt or Algeria or Iraq? Or was it that broader 'nation', the Arab world? Particular nationalisms were softened by the wider concept, and were sometimes in collision with it. Moreover, Islam also had its ideal community, which was to be expressed after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the *khilafat* or caliphate movement.² Sometimes nationalist movements tended towards non-religious secularism, as in the Ba'ath parties or most spectacularly with Kemal Ataturk's radical transformation of Turkey.³

It turns out that in essence there are only a few positions waiting to be occupied, if one is to transform one's religion and society. This is the heart of what I have elsewhere called Position Theory.⁴ The aim of transformation, even though things happen blindly and unpredictably, is to preserve as much of one's heritage as is feasible and to improve the standing of the relevant community vis-à-vis the rampaging West. As we have seen, India has done very well by these criteria. It has allowed for changes, but has added them to a complex of traditions. It has the ancient past, but it also has modernity.

But how does what is seen from Banaras relate to what can be seen from the banks of the lower Nile? If you were to gaze outwards from the great river and the pyramids at the world in 1960, what would you see and what would you reflect upon? Cairo has its glories and its wounds: the pervasive presence of the foreign British still remained, though proud troopships no longer plied the Suez Canal. Shepherd's Hotel and the Gezira Club were constant signs that Egypt represented a mixed culture, and the pyramids were there as sentinels of an ancient glory which had greatly disappeared. What position should one adopt? I shall return to that question later, but let us first look at the wider scene.

To the North was Turkey which had been completely changed by Kemal Ataturk, through his secular revolution. The land had avoided entry into World War II, and the experiment of turning itself into a Western nation had more or less worked. The cloth cap had displaced the fez, Roman script had driven out Arabic writing. Islam, while by no means eradicated, had no part in the framing of the State's laws. Yet one might muse that an Islam without the shari'a is a mutilated thing, rather like Judaism without the Torah (yet that could be stronger as recent events had shown in Israel because national identity, reconceived, could hold people together, whereas in Turkey it was a different kind of nationalism, essentially based on language and a sense of Turkish heritage, which prevailed). In Turkey too the Sufi orders had been suppressed, and this tended to remove a powerful strand of traditional piety and popular devotion.

Our Muslim seated by the Nile might have thought deeply about this question. It would not have escaped his attention that many Muslims, from the Maghreb and through the heartlands, were saying that the reason why Islam had had to undergo the weakness and humiliation of conquest was that it was corrupt, and that the main cause of that corruption was Sufism. It encouraged new practices, including the cult of the tombs of

holy men and banding into groups who would pray together and meditate in chapels rather than mosques, and who often had rather extravagant interpretations of the hidden meaning of Holy Scripture. For this reason Islamic reform movements tended to recoil from Sufism and indeed to campaign actively against it.

Our pious Egyptian might not have known it, but it is hard to eradicate Sufism by edict and it was chiefly through its activity that Islam had continued in the Central Asian republics of the USSR through the Stalinist period.⁵ Likewise it could be well sustained in Turkey. Still, from the angle of a Position Theory, Turkey was a notable case of one main option: abandon the past (save for the cultural and linguistic legacy) and become a 'modern' Western-style State.

The secular or non-religious emphasis also animated the Palestinian resistance to Israel, chiefly because Palestinians included many Christians and it seemed necessary to transcend religion in the combat with the intruders. Our Egyptian could hardly fail to feel that there was something deeply unnatural about Israel. It was because here was a secular Jewish State, heavily supported by the Christian USA, which had retaken part of the Islamic heartlands. It was a thorn in the flesh of Islam: or more particularly an alien entity within the traditional Dar al-Islam (the territory of Islam) outside of which was the realm of war, where Muslims had a call to struggle against the intruding non-Muslims.⁶ Never mind the ancient friendliness of Muslims towards the Peoples of the Book. Now a more militant mood should prevail. Such sentiments, essentially Muslim, could not so easily animate Christians and others and so there was merit in the secular nationalist ideologies which for forty years remained vigorous after WWII.

Secularist positions kept control of Islam, or campaigned actively against it; or at least framed the laws of the nation State without great regard to it. This was the pattern in Iraq, Syria, Algeria and Tunisia, as well of Turkey. Egypt was more directly a pioneer of Islamic modernism, which was somewhat different from secular nationalism, though accommodating towards it. Anyway, for the present we have sketched in the first position in relation to the West: namely *secular nationalism*.

Position Two is what I have just referred to, that is, Islamic modernism, namely the attempt to combine the best of modern knowledge with the Islamic heritage. It often implies great modification to the Law, and attempts to sweep away premodern ideas and to a great degree those of classical Islam in the period of its great flowering in the Abbasid period, from the 8th Century C.E. onwards. Modernism tended to go back to the Qur'an and origins, but reinterpreted them in the light of modern knowledge. It emphasized aspects of the heritage in accord with up-to-date values. For instance the modernists (e.g. Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Iqbal) were attracted by the Mu'tazila school, which stressed human free will and so our responsibility to struggle against evil in society, and believed in the power of human reason.⁷ Modernism rejected the otherworldly mysticism of the new wisdom which flowed from the thought, ultimately, of Ibn-'Arabi and Mulla Sadra. Of all the modernist reformers the most important was Muhammad Abduh, whose journal *Al-Manar* (The Lighthouse), started in 1938 and carried on later by Rida until 1936, had wide influence as far afield as Indonesia. Some questions posed in it, for example, stimulated a three-volume response by the famous writer Shakib Arslan, entitled 'Why

do the Muslims stay behind while others progress?', subsequently translated from Arabic into Malay. This itself was a symptomatic title.⁸

In some ways Islamic Modernism corresponds to Liberal Protestantism. In one respect however there is quite a great divergence. For though modernizing Muslims might accept Western techniques of textual and higher criticism of the scriptures, the doctrinal effects on Islam were so vastly less than were the case with the Bible. The Qur'an is much more homogeneous, composed over a very short space of time and dealing with a much more transparent set of historical facts, than the New Testament. And so it was much easier for Muslims to adapt to this aspect of Western scholarship. Of course, some Westerners had their prejudices, e.g., about Muhammad, and these showed through, and could be repudiated.⁹

Probably the most important part of reformism was the acceptance of sweeping changes in the Law, with a rejection of much of the medieval systems, especially as they impinged on economic matters. Also, the position of those who held that it was necessary to take that second step to which I referred earlier, namely to adopt Western-style constitutions as a background to the development of modern education and science, meant that they espoused openly the notion that government and the people were the source of legislation, which hitherto had been regarded as an eternal divine prerogative. In fact, one way and another virtually all nations in the Muslim world, save Turkey and Saudi Arabia, evolved a mixed law, such as the so-called Anglo-Muhammadan Law in the Indian subcontinent. The mixed law involved retaining some or all elements of personal law, but for the rest having Western-style codes.

The positions of Secular Nationalism and Muslim Modernism could be merged in a compromise position which retained the essentials of Islamic piety with a broadly non-religious and technocratic ordering of the State, with national aspirations emphasized, either in the narrower sense or in the wider meaning of Pan-Arabism. Such, broadly, was Nasser's Egypt. Yet Nasser had at one time been close to the Muslim Brotherhood. They are one among a number of Islamic revivals which are commonly called fundamentalist. I shall return to them shortly.

Meanwhile, conservatism was possible. At a not very conscious level, there was the continuance of tradition and of older ways of interpreting the Qur'an and the Law. Such tendencies were a means in a way of ignoring modern developments, and so were more prevalent in rural areas than in the newly swelling cities. Such traditionalism could be called the Oblivious Position. But it was one increasingly sapped by the necessary impinging of modern affairs upon the faithful – the advent successively of trains, cars, radios, television, planes and so forth. Especially the modern media or communication, above all radio and TV, which cut across the frontiers of illiteracy, left no one isolated from the modern world. The amplified drones of the muezzin could sound from the village mosque, but so also the frenzied cry of the radio could reverberate along its back streets. In this Oblivious Position, the attempt is made to continue business as usual.

Once, of course, the traditional functionaries of Islam and pious laity are aware of the challenge they begin to take up some form of conservative position, and give support to more articulate movements which aim to reestablish the position of Islam. In practice the

leadership for such reestablishment is reforming and very often radical. Such radicalism is found in those movements loosely called 'fundamentalist.' The nearest thing to a genuinely conservative modern State, itself heir to a reforming revolution in the premodern period, is Saudi Arabia, which has the Qur'an as its constitution and which operates the Shari'a as being a mode of the divine shaping of society. Its Wahhabi puritanism has survived into the days of oil bounty.⁹ As far as Islamic theory goes, it is conservative, and so may represent what may be dubbed the Conservative Position.

The most important force indeed in the Islamic world today consists of the varieties of 'fundamentalism.' I would prefer to call such groups by other more appropriate names. What all are agreed on is the sweeping away of premodern Islam and replacing it with something more basic, such as the Islam of the Qur'an, or of the early period. One should get rid of the accretions of Classical Islam. So among the Muslim Brotherhood we have what might be called Neofoundationalism: the slogan is 'Back to the Qur'an'. With Khomeini it is a matter of going back to what happened after the foundational period, with the formation of the Shi'a: we can call it Neopostfoundationalism. Why in both cases the 'Neo'? Basically because these movements have modern interpretations and methods. For instance, the early period of Islam did not have the nation-State as we conceive it today. Khomeini has given us the idea, however, of the Islamic Republic, that is of a non-monarchical nation-State.¹⁰ His doctrines are essentially a blending of modern political institutions and a revamped Law based on Shi'a interpretation. The conservative part of his program is the restoration of Islamic Law and custom as the norm for the State. So women no longer go out in Western clothes, and they take up anew the chador. But they do so in a context in which modern technology and the rest is used, for example in the prosecution of the war against Iraq. The old Shi'a virtue of martyrdom is given new meaning. It is, then, a mix of old and new. The means of conducting the State are for the most part modern: but ritual and ethical behavior are as far as may be traditional.

If I may go on an aside here, it is by no means the case that Christian fundamentalists are conservative, even though they may often be characterized as conservative evangelicals. Let us consider this in the light of the various dimensions of religion. Doctrinally it is true they are fairly conservative, and antimodern in their selective rejection of some strands of modern science and scholarship. But in some ways they may in fact be rather innovative, e.g., in their reading of the Last Things. Their view of sacred narrative is conservative in that it usually involves a very literal view of the Biblical stories. In ethics, they are moderately conservative. Though their ethos conforms to the generally acceptable norms of Western society they emphasize certain issues, like not drinking or abortion rights. Their ethos is often highly patriotic, and on political issues they have a strong sense of national strength and identity. In many respects they have attained a blend of Biblical Christianity and nationalism. In ritual and the like they are highly innovative and open-minded. They have pioneered new modes first of the use of the radio and then the television medium. They have given a new style to Protestant preaching and ritual. Organizationally they are innovative, for they cut across denominational ties. Their use of the arts is also somewhat novel. So in many ways it is misleading to look on them as conservative: they are highly up to date and pioneering in certain respects. They are very far removed from traditional

Christians and even from traditional Protestants. In so far as they look to the Bible as the basis of faith they are Neofoundationalists.¹¹

To return from our aside, the Muslim Brotherhood and other revolutionaries have some resemblances to Christian fundamentalists in that they tend to literalism, are strongly evangelical in tone, entertain certitude, and often have experienced some conversion. For I have not mentioned the experiential dimension above. The modern notion of being 'born again' is important in the Christian case; but it is possible equally to meet born-again Muslims, who have entered modern life, but hanker for older assurance, and undergo conversion to the radical new movement. Such conversion glues them to one another and to the movement, and gives power to their courage and commitment. But what gives the Muslim Brother or his equivalent in other organizations a special edge is that he advocates reimposing the Law. His commitment is among other things to a detailed net of obligations. He may not altogether trust the traditional *'ulama*. But he believes in the Qur'an and the *sunna*. Our Muslim sitting gazing across the brown luminescence of the Nile would remember, perhaps, some of the fiery events of the past – the burning of old Cairo in 1952, the prelude to the taking over of power by the Free Officers, and so of Nasser's regime. He might recall before that, in 1949, how Salim Zaki the police chief had been blown up, a protest against the armistice with Israel. He might recall too how till Sadat's time the Brothers had been driven underground. Indeed Sadat's own assassination, still in the future, was brought about by members of an offshoot of the Brotherhood. The Brothers were strongly nationalist and Islamic: but in their case nationalism was directed as much against their own government as against foreign enemies. They differed from the Modernists in that the latter were much more given to the appeal to reason and tended to believe in liberal institutions. The radicals in Islam do not deny democracy, but it is not religiously a tolerant democracy.¹²

We see in this sketch that the most important thing is the Law. This is something which is given however differently it may be interpreted. It has its complexities and is not subject to fashion. In theory it is something fixed, though it may have been overlaid by the cobwebs of medieval complications, rendering it difficult to use in modern circumstances. But its bones are the structure of the good society, and it is because it has been laid aside that Islam remains corrupt.

In regard to the implementation of the Law, the situation does not look hopeful to anyone bending his gaze from the banks of the Nile. Only in a few countries is any substantial element of the old Shari'a used – in Sudan, in Iran, in Pakistan, in Saudi Arabia, in some smaller emirates. Elsewhere it applies primarily to personal and family law. In a sense law, like religion, has been largely privatized. Of the major Islamic countries, Saudi Arabia and Iran have the most extensive place for the Shari'a. Of these, the thinking behind the Iranian regime is the more radical, and the Arabian scene is more traditional (though based on a somewhat premodern reform movement which was Neofoundationalist).

But the future may be different: I believe that the forces of Islamic radicalism will grow in strength, for the following reasons. First, the Muslim countries have not had altogether a happy development since World War II, or more precisely, since the time of independence of colonial rule. Except for those countries with small populations

and large oil resources, economic development has been disappointing, and has often involved great intrusions of modern Western values into rather traditionalist societies. Second, because of the structures of world power, post-independence countries have felt their relative dependence on the West. For both these reasons, the post-colonial situation has presented considerable Occidental challenges to received values. The result is that nationalism and a purified Islam tend to combine, rejecting both Western values (at least in part) and premodern and classical Islamic values as being corrupt. In all this perhaps the Shah of Iran was a good symbol. His rapid economic development may have benefitted a rising middle class. But his bombastic nationalism, harking back to the days of Cyrus the Great, and reliving the glories of the imperial past, was an affront to many Islamic nationalists. His development plans, then, carried a non-Islamic and even anti-Islamic message. Second, he owed his throne to Western powers after the overthrow of Mossadeq. As it happened the most powerful of the various elements opposing him were the clergy and the non-Westernized masses: though many middle class educated folk supported Islamic nationalism.

It is this heady combination of ideals, of a new order in which the State follows Islamic principles and at the same time is based on the notion of a people, which has such strong force today. As we have noted, nationalism in the form of imperialism spreads counter-imperialist nationalism. Despite the departure of the old colonial powers, much of the force of counter-imperialism remains, especially as a new nationalist elite emerges from a different system of schooling. It is often the second generation which leads attempts to achieve true independence. This is part of the attraction of socialism, that it is a stratagem to reduce economic dependence. This could be said of the political parties of Syria, Iraq and Algeria.

With all this, there is a certain convergence of Islam itself. As many countries move away from classical Law, there is a reinforcement of the tendency to go back to origins – the so-called Salafiyah tendency. This reduces the authority of the diverse medieval law schools and of the *hadith*. The Qur'an occupies a stronger and stronger position. Even the distinctions between Shi'a and Sunna diminish as each movement adapts the Law to the new demands of the national State. Another cause of convergence is that Islam is even more self-conscious as being a world-wide entity. Rapid communications bring more and more pilgrims to Mecca, borne on jumbo-jets. There is an impulse to diminish differences of interpretation and of loyalty. In Durban-Westville University, for instance, when I visited there in 1982, the students' union displayed huge pictures of the Ayatollah Khomeini, even though many of the students were not Shi'a. Many of the divisions of Islam, when looked back upon from the perspective of the late 20th Century, seem irrelevant to the anticolonialist struggle. Moreover, greater emphasis on education in the postcolonial world has produced a new generation of three-quarters educated people, such as we meet at home in the West: with little sophistication in humanities scholarship and an ignorance of critical ways of probing old texts and old evidences. They can easily become Neofoundationalists.

And so girls at Cairo University wear the veil, taking this symbol up again, to show their new commitments. Moreover, when individualism is spread because of the impact

of Western ideas and economics, the glue of a new cohesiveness is emotional. The born-again Muslim is the typical product of novelty and great social change.

In Durban-Westville University aforementioned, I sat in a main square on the campus for the days I was there, and students eventually came up to converse with me. One of them was a tall fellow with a white lace prayer cap on his head. He turned out to be a former sailor. He had been to San Francisco and New York and in many seaports of the world, where, according to his account, he had sinned with gusto: until he converted to Islam, to his traditional faith which he had not hitherto taken seriously. He announced himself as a born-again Muslim. He expatiated on the glories of Islam and did not mind about the Ayatollah's picture, which went against older practice. He cheerfully reminded me that someone who had so successfully bashed Westerners (no offense meant, he said: It was the Western *system* to which he objected) could not be all bad, in fact was a universal Muslim hero (he averred). This youngish man was for me a harbinger of future revolutions and coups d'état, when Muslim 'fundamentalism' will seize power in a number of countries where secular or modernizing States display a corruption and incompetence mirroring that of classical and medieval Islam. Forward to the future, and back to origins: these are the twin impulses which will swing neofoundationalism into positions of power.

Much of this testifies to the failure of Islamic modernism. It is because of a strength and a weakness of Islam itself. The strength is that Islam's scripture is not egregiously out of tune with modern science, and so you can be a literalist without talking nonsense.¹³ This means that Neofoundationalist Islam can live more easily in the mainstream of modern educated life. The weakness is that it is hard to produce a stable way of introducing the Shari'a back into daily life, suitably blended and reformed. Modernism implies a double source of conduct and political organization – with God and the popular will as being the twin sources of authority, with reason as the treacherous arbiter.

The fact is that Islam has to make dramatic concessions to live in modernity. And it has the disadvantage that an Islamic State has to treat minorities, even if Christian and Jewish, as second-class citizens, and this will remain a constant source of friction and problems, as in the southern Sudan and Pakistan. The way out, to have a tolerant overarching ideal, like the Panchasila in Indonesia, looks like putting Islam, with its absolutist claims, down.

Of the major civilizational bodies, Islam, once the most successful, is now the least successful: and so heading for greater strength and greater trouble.

[Endnotes]

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3. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1968)
4. Ninian Smart, *A Theory of Religious and Ideological Change Illustrated from South Asian Religious Nationalisms* (Tempe, 1984)

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10. Michael Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1980)
11. See my article cited above, n. 4
12. Even with the *millet* system, which has seeds in it of federalism: A.D. Alderson, *The Structure of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1956)
13. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago, 1982)

CHAPTER 13

Salman Rushdie in a Plural World

The death threat to Rushdie raises the issue of how religions and ideologies should treat one another in a shrunken world.

The Salman Rushdie affair is the beginning of a new era. From now on international threats of death will become fashionable. It is the first of many heresy hunts, in a new key. Already Italian police have been told to guard Dante's tomb, since he was unkind to the Prophet, consigning him to the lowest hell. Even though later the threat was found to be a hoax, that itself is significant for the spread of the practice. We live in a global city and a shrunken world. You cannot insulate one culture from another, and dedication (or fanaticism) has easy access to guns and targets. So the affair is serious. There are ethical and pragmatic questions surrounding the Ayatollah Khomeini's death sentence on Rushdie.

Had a novel contained extremely insulting references to Jews or to African Americans, what would we think? Racial insults are thought to be the most serious in the modern mind, closely followed by gender insults. Yet we are reluctant to curb the press or publishing, for the values of openness have sunk deep roots in the American Western psyche: and the open society is on the march, from Chile to Poland, and from Jamaica to Korea. It seems repugnant to inhibit criticism by imposing laws of blasphemy.

On the other side, there should doubtless be some rules of courtesy if the great religions are to live together in our smaller and more volatile world. The Archbishop of Canterbury has recently suggested that laws of blasphemy should be extended in England to cover faiths other than Christianity, such as Islam and Hinduism, which now are present in a substantial way in the UK. Certainly it is anomalous that in England and elsewhere a person can be prosecuted for blasphemy for an insult to Christianity but not for an insult to Theosophy. We think it is anomalous no doubt because we in America have got used to the idea of a secular State, that is to say, a system in which no religion is established. There should be impartiality among faiths. But it is not surprising if Muslims feel that Westerners get more upset by attacks on their own sensibilities than on insults to the Islamic ethos. Moreover, it happens that many Muslims do not share the Western notion that the State should be religiously impartial.

Let us disentangle various matters. First, what should the relations between religions be in the modern world? Second, should it be an offence to insult a religion? Third, should States protect free speech, even where it is disgraceful and provocative? Fourth, and by the way, does Salman Rushdie really insult Islam?

Relations between Religions

First, then, about religions: It needs to be kept in mind that the past history of inter-religious relations has been so often murky. There has typically been little mutual respect. Christians have considered Muslims to be blasphemous infidels, and Muslims have looked on Christians as idolatrous and polytheistic, guilty of the heinous sin of *shirk* (having another god beside Allah). We know about the anti-Semitic record of Christendom. The relations between Buddhists and Confucians and Taoists in China have sometimes been very bad: and followers of Siva and Vishnu have clashed in India. One culture's norm has been repugnant to another's: and one person's inspiration has been silliness to others. Secular ideologies have also been drawn into such bitterness. In Stalin's times all religions were egregiously persecuted. A friend of mine was condemned to prison in Czechoslovakia for starting a yoga society. The Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea savagely attacked Buddhism. Such tensions between worldviews and value-systems are dangerous today, partly because religions often reinforce ethnic and national identities, and so can fan hostilities between groups; and partly because warfare has such terrible power to destroy. Terrorism, possibly fuelled by desires for avenging insults and humiliations, grows daily in potential, as technologies of death-dealing become more widely dispersed.

It therefore seems proper that religions and worldviews should respect one another. Ours should be a time of dialogue, rather than confrontation. And it happens that in many ways relations between religions have greatly improved. Yet there are some limitations on the sweetness of dialogue. For there may be elements of another faith which I can hardly agree with and may think to be morally wrong. For instance, I happen to feel that Muslim ideas of marriage, though often in the past superior in results to traditional Christian ways of treating women, are wrong by modern standards. Am I to give up the expression of this view? Before coming to that, let me make a point about dialogue and education.

Not only should the great religions respect one another and engage in dialogue aimed at furthering mutual understanding, but also there is a role for education. I happen to have been involved in two projects, one in Britain, including Northern Ireland, and the other in California, directed towards helping with the curriculum in schools. The first brought multicultural religious education to the fore both in primary and secondary education. For Britain's schools now include significant numbers of Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and other children as well as traditional Christians and floating secularized students. The second is called 'Religious Contours of California' which seeks to enrich curricula by including material on religions seen through the window of their incarnations in California. Soon there will be more Muslims than Jews in Los Angeles. In much of California East Asian students are prominent. Bahai, Unificationists, Buddhists, Catholics, Mormons, Christian Scientists – name a group and you will find it has played a meaningful part in California's history. We seek to give students knowledge and empathy towards religions of varying kinds. How they ultimately value them is of course up to the students. But you need to understand them first before you can judge them. Just as important is the thought that you need to comprehend the religions of the world in some degree in order to understand

world politics and even economics. Think of the Confucian roots of Japan's economic success.

In short, education needs to play its part. The modern study of religion, stressing cross-cultural awareness, is vital here. Also, we need to pressure parents and communities into being open about alternatives. Often in the past, and too often in the present, religious education in the various denominations and religions keeps silent about other religions, instead of giving a constructive view of them. Narrowness in faith can be a prelude to vicious 'religionism', that is the ignorant despising of other faiths. Just because we live in a plural world, people should no longer be kept blinkered. If they choose a faith it should be freely.

All this means that polemics should be conducted in a seemly way. It may be that Rushdie overstepped the bounds of seemliness. This brings us to the next question: Should it be an offence to insult a religion?

Governments and communities are both likely to feel that insults which spark riots should be eliminated. They wish to keep the peace. But, in my opinion, the propensity of folk to riot about faith is basically their responsibility, even if some insults occur. There are faults on both sides. What kind of a religious faith is it which bursts out into violence? You could easily argue, in the Middle Ages, that Jews, by not recognizing Jesus Christ as savior, were insulting Christians – and you know how deeply people feel about their faith: so it is not surprising if pogroms occurred. Surely one of the major curses of human civilization, especially in the West, has been the inclination to use violence and force against those who hold rival values. It has taken us a long time to outgrow those impulses which led Catholics and Lutherans to drown Anabaptists, as a due punishment for the latter's arguing for adult baptism by total immersion! Or have we outgrown these impulses? So-called cults are often given a bad deal. Violence against others is a sign of deep insecurity, not of faith and commitment.

A Disturbing Thought – Uncertainty

It seems to me sufficient that the laws of libel are observed. The supposed crime of blasphemy should not be recognized. It is too easy for groups to inflate their sense of outrage. And what occurs at a national level should occur at a transnational level. There are plenty of occasions to demonstrate against nastiness. Religions by themselves do not need special protection. So it may be a moral offence, but should not be regarded as a legal offence, to insult a religion. Good relations between religions and ideologies need to be promoted by good manners and human contact, not by censorship.

But behind my argument there is something disturbing. It is the thought that matters of truth and value are uncertain. Christians once thought that the Jews had been presented with the evidence in the shape of the Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and were wilful in not seeing the truth: likewise Rushdie as an apostate is specially at fault because he has seen the truth and now turned his back on it. But the fact is that none can prove his faith except on premises guaranteed by his faith. Matters of truth in worldviews,

whether Marxism, liberal democracy, Christianity or Islam, are soft. You can have good reasons for your commitment, but they are soft reasons. For instance the divine origin of the Qur'an can be supported by the thought that Muhammad was a non-literate person who would not have the genius to originate its lovely cadences. But that is not a *proof* of its divine origin. Jesus' profound parables are one reason for thinking of him as Son of God, but this is scarcely a clinching argument. In the pluralism of worldviews, both religious and non-religious, there are only soft arguments and no proofs. Faith does not demand proofs, though faith may sometimes see reasons as proofs, in its enthusiasm.

Now what I have just enunciated is a view which quite a lot of the faithful in varying faiths will find disturbing. It is the kind of open, liberal, capitalist, democratic position which may generate a backlash, especially in countries and continents which have experienced such views as being the ideology of colonial conquerors.

But this brings me back to the question posed earlier. Do I not have the right to criticize (say) Muslim laws on women? Surely. Freedom of thought and expression imply nothing less. It is true that ideally criticism should be done with good taste and fine manners. But we cannot have science and the development of knowledge without criticism, that is to say questioning. As Salman Rushdie says, the opposite of faith is doubt: but it is not the opposite of knowledge, but its stimulating companion. And doubt too needs to accompany faith, in so far as we cannot insulate matters of religion from the generally critical atmosphere which needs to pervade the modern world. There is nothing particularly Western about the growth of science, which is a universal human enterprise. And it is scarcely possible to combine education which involves questioning and testing what is received with a quite uncritical acceptance of religion.

For better or worse the faiths have entered the period of individual judgment. Even the idea that we should accept authority (such as the Pope or the Qu'ran) needs to be embraced by the individual according to his or her own judgment.

We may note another factor in the globalization of world culture: every position, whether Islam, Marxism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism or Humanism is, within this human community, a minority position. However impressive the numbers (like: a billion Muslims and more in today's world), each faith is in a minority of humanity. In this condition the need for compromise is obvious. The Muslims have no greater right than Christians or Marxists to dictate what humanity should believe.

So, while people should speak courteously about each other's beliefs, they should not be coerced. And having laws about blasphemy, especially polyvalent blasphemy, would grossly curtail the freedom to write and speak: Imagine if you couldn't criticize Marxism, or Christianity, or Islam, or Humanism, or Buddhism.

States and Free Speech

It seems to me, then, that States should protect free speech, even when it is disgraceful and provocative. This is not to give people the right to incite violence against others, such as was the case with Nazi propaganda or Stalinist ideology. But if a person peacefully

publishes a prickly book, this creates no right to shut him up. If anything it is Khomeini not Rushdie who needs censorship, for he has openly called for another person's death. Of course, ultimately by giving freedom to individuals to express their beliefs and doubts the repressive modern State will be undermined. And that is a good thing too. We have gone far too far along the line of accepting the unquestioned authority of other States. If individuals should not incite to kill, neither should States.

In accord with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the United Nations ought to censure those who threaten death to citizens of the world. Since there is likely to be what Jack Miles of the *Los Angeles Times* has called 'the globalization of censorship' (Sunday, Feb. 26, Book Section), multinational action is called for, to forestall the spread of international threats.

My last question had to do with the Rushdie book: does it truly insult Islam? I think many Muslims would find it hard to take, though it is a work of fiction. The chief offending parts describe dreams, of a crazed character. But they are dreams which contain outrageous moments – the women of a brothel taking the names of the Prophet's wives, the suggestion that the scribe who wrote down the Qur'an altered bits here and there, and the Prophet didn't notice, the thought that revelation included the spouting of rules and more rules, put there for the convenience of the Prophet, etc. On one page (p. 374), there is a prophetic passage: Mahound (i.e. Muhammad) says: 'Your blasphemy, Salman, can't be forgiven. Did you think I wouldn't work it out? Your words against the Word of God.'

Incidentally, there is a paradox. While Muslims strenuously deny that Muhammad is divine, while Christians claim that Jesus is, modern Christians often stress the human imperfections of Jesus, such as his lack of complete knowledge, having emptied himself to become human. On the other hand, Muslims in practice stress the perfection of the Prophet, and do not tolerate doubts about his wisdom or knowledge. The Prophet is in practice more exalted than Jesus.

So even though Salman Rushdie has written fiction and within that a (for many Muslims obnoxious) dream, it is still doubtful, to say the least, whether he should be censored. In fact, I would hold that people have to be given the freedom to utter what some may think to be offensive. The novel, by the way, is not very good – wordy, confusingly allegorical, without a story line and a poor person's *Ulysses*.¹

Fortunately, moderate Muslim voices have spoken in a tolerant vein. Thus, for instance, Zaki Badawi, a prominent British leader of Islam, has condemned the death threat and offered a place to Rushdie in his own home, while at the same time expressing the view that he has insulted Islam. Abdul Farid Gabteni, a prominent French leader, has also repudiated the idea that Rushdie should be killed. Such attitudes are a reminder that Islam, like other religions, has considerable diversity within it.

The Open Society

All this has some social significance in the West. In Europe, especially in Germany, France and Britain, there are substantial Muslim minorities (particularly, Turks, Algerians and

Pakistanis) who are becoming somewhat integrated into their host societies. The Rushdie dispute is a setback, if it is perceived that so many Muslims want to contravene the hard-won values stemming from the Enlightenment. In the United States there is a growing Muslim presence, both among migrants from the Middle East, including many of course from Iran, and among African Americans. It would be unfortunate if the many adverse Western images of Islam were reinforced by the current affair.

The Rushdie furore brings into relief the problem of the open society: does it have global application? Do we want to have an open and tolerant humanity? I believe so, for the following reason. A tolerant society may not give every group everything it wants. It may be that some group wants a Christian or a Buddhist or a Muslim State, controlled by the relevant values and laws. But where one group dominates the State thus, minorities (and there are now minorities everywhere) suffer, like Buddhists in Vietnam, Christians and others in the Sudan, Jews in 18th century England, and so on. But in an open society, each group can gain at least eighty per cent of what it wants – such as the possibility of following Muslim or Christian rules of daily living up to a point where they do not interfere with pluralistic government. They might have to put up with insults to Islam or the Christian faith or whatever. Provided such insults do not call for cruelty or murder, they are scarcely a matter for the wider community, save that that community would always call for courtesy in debate. People who get easily insulted are weak. They have some insecurity. That there are many Muslims who are touchy, because of the way Islam has been treated by a colonial and rampaging West, should not surprise us. But it is still their problem. We should not be dictated to by people who flaunt their proneness to anger.

Islam, thank Allah, is not all or perhaps at all like that grim faith expressed by Khomeini. But meanwhile Salman Rushdie will have to stay in hiding for the rest of his natural life. Don't let us forget that.

Endnote

1. *The Satanic Verses* (Boston: Viking, 1988)

The Twenty-First Century and Small Peoples

It is part of the considerable achievements of Juha Pentikäinen that he has greatly increased our knowledge of minority peoples in the north – in Scandinavia, Russia and Siberia; and he has greatly stimulated modern research into circumpolar peoples. He has been a strong advocate of minority pluralism, in the face of assaults by majority ideologies and capitalism.

I wish to reflect about some of the issues: the gradual cooperation among such isolated peoples in the global world of today; the effect of the adaptations which shamanic and other such societies must of necessity undergo; the possibility of the unification of indigenous groups within the whole world; and the theory of shamanism as the ancestor of the numinous (or prophetic) and the mystical (or contemplative) strain of religious experience.

In his book *Shamanism and Culture* (Pentikäinen 1998: 114 ff.) he contemplates the chances of survival among various of the peoples with their own languages and he notes the crucial role of shamanism in reviving their cultures. Although it is heavily expressed through rituals and myths, and these are different in different peoples, nevertheless there are recurrent motifs, both of experience and cosmology. With the coming of reading, in their own language and in the language of their region (that is, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Russian, English, French, Danish), the possibility of a loose common ideology is possible, at least in the future.

It is an obvious fact that these peoples are not numerous as far as population goes, in northern Europe and Siberia. The same is true of varied groups in the world, such as the Hmong, the Australian aborigines, the Toda and so forth. Such small peoples are typically embedded in larger nations. Sometimes they have enough population to fight a long drawn-out war against the local power – like the Karen in Myanmar: but their continued existence is precarious. It is true of course that in the Pacific there are a number of islands, such as Nauru and the group known as Kiribati, which are able to survive as micro-nations. This is the benefit of water round about you. Generally, however, there is little thought given to granting indigenous people independence, though headway towards autonomy is found notably in Canada and Scandinavia. There are also similar enclaves left over from the old Soviet Union in contemporary Russia. A sort of autonomy is granted to Native Americans in the U.S.A. But whether or not an indigenous group has such autonomy, it could use alliances with others. There is considerable virtue in numbers; there are like problems besetting such groups facing up to the national cultures of their vicinity, often brutally imposing their own styles of life. Extending such alliances to a global scale is a clear advantage.

There is a complication for all such smaller peoples: the missionary religions (Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, Mormonism, Islam, Hinduism, etc.). Let me illustrate the problem with the most common example, that of Christianity of one sort or another. Typically a small-scale people will contain at least two groups – Christians and followers of traditional practices. Usually (notably in Africa) a third group will emerge, incorporating themes from indigenous culture and from Christianity, and typically forming an independent Church or new religion.

Then again there is another, everyday aspect of invading habits and techniques from (mostly) global capitalism which affects indigenous society. In the case of the former Soviet Union, the controls of Marxism must be reckoned with (indeed in some respects Marxism was like a missionary religion). Likewise with the Chinese dominance throughout the Han-controlled empire, Maoism and its values prevailed and now a milder form of capitalism has imposed its culture on the smaller indigenous peoples.

All this riven nature of the indigenous culture is particularly evident throughout sub-Saharan Africa. But it is found throughout the

world. In many such cases shamanism is a vital ingredient of folk culture, and may be found among new religions which often use themes from traditional culture with those of the invasive major religion.

Shamanism may also figure in major traditions as well, in the Hebrew Bible among the Prophets, in Tibetan Buddhism, etc. But in modern societies, the practice of shamanism has faded, yet what holds society is, among other things, language, and to some degree it is infused with shamanistic concepts. If indigenous groups are to be united, we need a word or two to characterize such societies. Because of the advance of world capitalism and modern ways of doing things, such groups have now tended to give up any hunting and fishing (or they treat it as a kind of spare time, a leisure or holiday activity or pastime), and herding is now controlled by modern methods, and so on. One of the functions of shamans has faded away. Language too across the world is altered whenever pre-literate society gives way to the written world. Behind it already lurks the Internet, by the way! With really small groups, such as the Khanty, studied a lot by Pentikäinen, at the very time that literacy begins to pervade culture, the language is under threat through wider, crushing forces (through Stalin and his successors) or more mildly through the aforementioned cultural and economic influences. Not all such groups are shamanistic, and words such as 'paganism' and 'animism' are for various reasons inappropriate. I shall use the locution "spiritism" to refer to those communities' beliefs, where the major religions do not pervade the whole of a society. I am thinking that indigenous societies in which spiritism continues ought to form an alliance with one another if they wish to continue with their traditional values. Thus they may form a loose alliance to promote their values and to enter into dialogue with the grander powers of this world: it can sympathetically argue with the great traditions.

Already we are implying the transformation brought about by capitalism and by foreign cultural invasions upon shamanic society. First, the conception of the land is liable to differ greatly between traditional shamanic society and that of the great power surrounding it. A hunting and gathering society tends to look on land collectively, and this attitude may be handed on to the post-shamanic era. Spiritist groups often regard land more as a sphere of operation and living; but the capitalist economy is one where territory is open to possession, and though in (for instance) the Soviet epoch land was collectivised in a sense, it was in reality owned by the State and not, as with the smaller groups,

open freely to the people living on it. But in the contemporary world it is largely the capitalistic invasion which has to be taken more seriously by the indigenous peoples. Here the whole ethos of a people as having land to roam over is misunderstood by the stronger society, and this has led to considerable and bitter controversies. Occasionally, their wider view of land can lead to autonomous arrangement for the minority but the 'modern attitude' to property can become invasive. Moreover, the whole concept of conveying goods to such a people reflects a similar attitude to property.

Second, the small group may be fighting to preserve its language. This is one motive for having its own modern-style schools. The advent of the written language, some understanding of science, some kind of religious education and so forth creates a diverse ethos of knowledge, a new epistemology. Words thereby subtly change their meaning. While fighting off linguistic defeat, you nevertheless have to make concessions to modernity and to the values of the larger society. In due course some folk go to university. They may or may not return. The whole process gives them autonomy at a price.

Third, schools have a prominent role in reviving the culture. As such they become vehicles of something labelled religion (whether that concept had existed in that form in the traditional society). This may lead to the articulation and defence of spiritism, probably an affirmation of environmentalism (sometimes in a delightful, romantic form), and as commendation of certain ritual practices as conducive to spiritual experience and health. But the expression of these values owes something to procedures of the wider cultures. The group's values are adjacent, as it were, to those of modern science.

Fourth, in any case, matters such as manufactured food, foreign alcohol, television and so forth will have changed indigenous society immensely. Usually the traffic between the homeland of the indigenous group will be unfettered: and this will allow many assimilated people to leave an indigenous society. In all these ways the smaller society and religion will be altered. We are reaching the end of an epoch, when indigenous groups could live their own life on this planet.

Often older rituals are staged, and become tourist attractions. Indigenous dress, especially that for ceremonial occasions, becomes quaint. This is so already for larger nations: Scottish dress is not widely worn except for special events: Highland games, weddings and so forth. Similarly the normal garb for work typically is Western. In Japan and

Korea, much of the Arab world and so on Western dress is usual, or some minor variant of it, in China for example. Only in a minority of societies does native dress have any heavy use. So even when a society claims to be traditional, this is not always evident from its behaviour.

All this means the end of traditional shamanism. One of the vital merits of Juha Pentikäinen's expeditions to Siberia is to acquaint a wider world of scholarship and of humanity in general with the existence of particular forms of shamanism. It is important to us to realize how shamans operate, as well as to indicate their sufferings under the Soviet regime. But though the smaller peoples may survive, the leadership of shamans will probably fade. Their future will lie in translations of their myths, rituals and experiences. It is like the case of earlier religions: like the transmogrification of Greek myths in the Periclean age.

Another form of translation lies in the merger between shamanic and other ideas from the indigenous cultures and forms of (typically) Christianity. One sees elements of shamanic myth and experience in the life of Isaiah Shembe in the founding of the Zulu Zionist Church of the Ama-Nazaretha (Sundkler 1976); just as there are echoes of the same motifs among the prophets of the Hebrew Bible.

Connected with these matters is the whole question of spiritism – or if you like polytheism. There are several ways of dealing with many gods and spirits in the modern world: to psychologize them, to treat them as essentially as reflecting the One Spirit, or to deny them. The crisis may arise for indigenous people through the advent of modern farming techniques, together with the arrival of scientific ways of thinking: shamanic and other approaches to the gods are not thought of any longer as really efficacious. This does not mean the death of the myths, but rather their reinterpretation. The myths involve gods or spirits: they may themselves be reinterpreted.

Part of ritual may comprise transactions with the gods – for instance the bear ritual in Ainu practice, now greatly faded. The visitation by the *kamuy*, the bear's dismemberment and despatch to his sacred mountain world, may lead him to revisit the human world again. With the fading of the ritual, the older relationship between the spirits and humans will not be intense, and indeed may lead to its being forgotten. It was once thought no doubt that such rituals as sacrifice and worship would lead the gods to be benign towards us. Though gods might be superior in power and authority to us, the sacrificial rituals were conceived essentially as being social and interpersonal. But the rites still

have a meaning when holiness is not thought of so much as having to do with power, but with love and ethics. Because the one God rules over everything and is transcendent he or she is liable to be less affected by modern transactions with nature. She is seen, as God, to be the author of nature: while Neptune is tightly connected to the sea, the one God can claim to be on the side of science, for nature contains her own inner regularities or laws. This together with the evident power of larger religions and civilizations gives incoming missionary religions an evident advantage. Mythology if taken too seriously can have disadvantages and often rests on concepts too easily at variance with those of science; and yet it is in mythology that the biographies of the various gods and spirits are told.

What can be done to revive these small-scale peoples? The first stage is with the empathy and acceptance of the shamanistic experience and mythology. That has come with the work of Eliade, Pentikäinen and others. But second you need a kind of philosophy which would give it modern (so to say respectable!) conceptual assumptions. Though not all religions believe in God (Buddhism and Jainism for instance do not believe in a Creator) – though Mahayana in some of its forms comes close – and so this position does not quite work, nevertheless as a thesis about the theistic and spiritist religions it has a certain force. It will back up shamanism as one expression of belief in the Real. I think the chief exponent historically of this position is that of Vivekananda, with his form of Neo-Vedanta. Let me expound this point.

It was interesting that this Neo-Vedanta had a saint to start it on its way: Ramakrishna. He did not however form its philosophy or theology (if you prefer). The reshaping of Sankara's philosophy was articulated in a masterly fashion by his disciple Vivekananda. This incorporated among other ideas: the belief that all religions point to the same truth, and the idea that there were differing levels of perception among people and thus differing levels of truth (essentially Sankara had stuck to two). It left a higher truth – a kind of Reality – beyond God and lesser gods and spirits. Such a modern Hindu theology fits various kinds of belief and allows a thicket of myths to be respected.

This would seem to be a way of accepting shamanism within the firmament of religions. It would tend to repudiate the older missionary condemnation of many sacred stories as simply false or as emanating from the Devil. It would encourage a dialogue between shamanism on the one hand and Christianity, Islam and Judaism on the other hand (all

these have elements of shamanism in their revelations). Of the theistic religions there is Hinduism (such as the theology of Ramanuja) to include with Abrahamic ones.

Doubtless shamanism is ancient and preceded the foundation of cities and the creation of the major religions. Its antiquity is attested by the similarities between the Americas' rituals and those of Europe-Asia. There are persuasively many themes. There is the empowerment of asceticism. There is the cosmic tree. There are dream experiences. There are numinous visions of gods and spirits. Many of such features are found in, for instance, South Asian religions: notably in Buddhist techniques of meditation, Hindu encounters with the divine, the power of *tapas* (body heat) and so forth. The question which I am inclined to ask is whether shamanism is as it were the ancestor of two notable (and sometimes contrasting) kinds of religious experience, those of the numinous and the mystical or contemplative kinds. These are in principle different, though they can also form an alliance.

Let me expand on this point. It is not generally given the incisive importance which it should have in the study of religion: it is not always appreciated that in Theravada Buddhism, for instance, there is a form of contemplation or in other words a practice of mysticism which is uninterpreted as an encounter or union with God, with the Other. Not that the Theravada denies the gods: but they are just forces in this world, like Bill Gates or Marshal Mannerheim. There is no Creator. Buddhists would reject Yahweh, the Christian God and Allah. When the mystical experience is seen in the context of the numinous experience of the Other and therefore the ritual of worship, naturally it is thought of as an act of union or communion with the Divine, with the Lord. If there is no Lord there, as in the case of nirvana, who is there to unite with? Often such experiences (seen as union or communion) as in the case of Meister Eckhart are interpreted as a union with the God beyond God (*deitas* beyond *deus*), with impersonal being or Reality rather than with God as an Other person. In other words, the Buddhist nirvana as seen in the context of the contemplative or mystical life does not involve union with anything, and in the Mahayana might have been seen differently as union with nothing. It is as near as you get in the great religions to 'pure' mysticism. With its 'no subject – no object' interpretation, with its utter calm, its peacefulness, its inwardness, it contrasts with the dynamism, holy fear, dualism, and numinosity of a God-centered faith. I am not

denying the one or the other. But they do contrast. Mind you, there are degrees of analogy.

In the mystical experience there is timelessness (as though time is blotted out), but the numinous God is everlasting: and the everlasting and the timeless may fuse, though they are different concepts, even of course they have a vital; and suggestive analogy, contemplative experience is indescribable: both because outer perception is blanked out and so also with inner discursive thought, but because too of its unutterable bliss, or rather something beyond bliss. The numinous' power and holiness are beyond expression too, off the scale of being superb, as it were. It is not implausible to see that the two directions of experience meet in the same place, so that the God who is without a (numinously) beyond is to be found also within (mystically), in that interiority below the self and ordinary consciousness.

It is commonly held, as I have implied, among Christian and other theists, that in the interior mode one unites with, identifies, communes with God. This makes it plausible (but I do not say that it is right – or for that matter wrong) to say that the numinous and the mystical are two differing ways of affirming the same reality. I do not wish to be making a judgment as to whether the Buddhist 'pure mysticism' is the correct way of interpreting the matter. But it is a possible path. But the numinous and the mystical have a certain attraction to one another in the great religious traditions. Consider the emergence in the Mahayana of *bhakti* trends and of the Pure Land schools; the development of Sufism in the numinous religion of Islam; and of the reappearance in Protestantism of mysticism among the nuns and monks of Anglicanism in the 19th Century.

Now in describing these developments in the wider religions of the world we are moving far from the particularities of Siberian or any other kind of shamanism, whether in Korea, Japan, Africa, the Americas or elsewhere. But it is possible to think of it as forming a preexistent nucleus which provided a framework of the numinous and the mystical. Consider India. The early shamanic movements (crystallizing into Jainism, Buddhism and other traditions) tended to concentrate on the asceticism and the inner path so far as these appeared in the shamanic nexus; while the more ritualized Vedic tradition tended more towards the numinous (and possibly hallucinogenic) experiences as these were present in shamanism.

One can have in Theravada Buddhism (carried over from early Buddhism to the Mahayana) the presence of the *axis mundi*. The various of the stages of meditation match differing levels of Mount Meru and beyond (upwards). There are gods there, including the high God of early Buddhism, who is Sakka or Indra. Brahma is higher yet. Attaining these godly states depends upon attaining the matched stages of meditation *jhanas*. Beyond the gods are the formless mystical states. What Buddhism does then is to subordinate cosmology to the inward path. Some modern commentators, like K.N. Jayatilleke (Jayatilleke 1974), have also seen the enormous size of the universe in ancient Buddhist thinking as in principle modern. It is certainly closer to contemporary astronomical cosmology than the worldview either of the Bible or of Aristotle. It is true that the Buddha is credited with believing that the earth is of a disk shape, resting on a turtle and ultimately on the ocean, causing earthquakes when the ocean is stormy, though other causes were the enlightenment of the Buddha, his death, etc. As it developed Buddhism's luxurious cosmology gave an account of heavens and hells which became increasingly complex. *Avichi* hell and other hot and cold and torturous hells (purgatories, perhaps, more strictly) lie below our earth, below our 'roseapple island' and the others, and likewise in other *lokas*. All these matched our meditational and psychic (good and bad) states in varying ways. They were refining an *axis mundi* and this was derived in principle from the world tree. One could develop relationship with other beings not by sexual intercourse, but in the upper stages by smiles and glances. There was a mythic counterpart to one's inner states, expressed through the cosmology: and this reflected the shamanic system of belief.

Hindu cosmology is more predominantly theistic but has a similar division into heavenly, earthly and hellish regions, round Mount Meru. Jainism has a not unlike system, though as in Buddhism the gods are ultimately not so important. The divinities in the Hindu tradition culminate in Brahma (and in Siva and Visnu in the trio of Hindu Gods). Sometimes Mount Meru is depicted with a roseapple tree on its peak, signalizing its supremacy. In the Hindu scheme God, as the place of liberation, so to say, becomes transcendental; while in Buddhism, the place of liberation is nirvana, a transcendental state, which is indescribable. The Buddha did not wish to reject the gods, but downgraded them, both in practice and ontologically. In doing this, he retained aspects of shamanic mythology. Some of these elements were expanded in Tibetan

Buddhism and elsewhere, under the influence not only of indigenous beliefs, but of the Hindu cosmology and practice.

In many ways the Native American and the Siberian vision quest, in being solitary and ascetic, reflects the mystical way. But it also contains spiritism, which in its most developed form becomes theism. As ancestor, so to say, of two major forms of religious experience, shamanism ought to attract respect. In developing a new philosophy, shamanism may help to create a sense of unity between the non-theistic and theistic religions. Another factor in sustaining shamanism doctrinally or philosophically has to do with its association with hunting. Nowadays few people actually hunt for food, and if they do it it is treated as a sport. Animals now are increasingly domesticated and the Sami often herd reindeers by helicopter. Even fishing is becoming increasingly industrialized. The fishing grounds are frequently combed by large and cunning ships. The lands across which indigenous folk hunted and the cold seas where they caught seals are shrinking and exploited by others. With the decline of the land through oil exploration, settlement, forestry and agriculture, the traditional pattern of hunting and gathering withers away as such. The doom of shamanism is portended. If a new breed arises, he or she is a knowledgeable person in a new world. The older affinity with animals, whether the bear or the jaguar or the hawk or the heron, remains: the older sense of the forest or the river or the icefield is still there. But the bears are diminished; even the jaguars are dying out; the hawks have less to swoop upon; and the heron's fish are no longer quite where they were. Yet the affinity with animals and their surroundings runs deep in the culture. This is converted into a new philosophy – of environmentalism. Even many of the rituals are so seen to have an environmental meaning: even the gods are hints and powers of the environment.

Gradually, no doubt, shamanism will rebuild itself through its philosophies of religious experience and environmentalism. Through these ideas it will be able to set up a dialogue with the major traditions. Let me see a harbinger of such a dialogue. Let me not be misunderstood. I am using the example of the recent dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Tenrikyo at the Gregorian University in Rome, 1998. I do not want to say that the revelation accorded Oyasama Miki was not genuine. At the same time I concur with the majority of Japanese researchers that this revelation took the form being based on a shamanistic experience or experiences. This not a reductionistic account. As an

Episcopalian I regard as divine revelation things which are counted as prophetic, some of which (Ezekiel, for instance) bear strong imprints of shamanism. Why should God not use modes of shamanism in his self-revelation? So I do not in seeing in Miki Oyasarna's life shamanistic traits express a reductionistic position. The doctrines of Tenrikyo command great respect, especially its emphasis on monotheism (Christianity for various reasons has to struggle with the Trinity doctrine). This dialogue between the weight of Catholic tradition and the smaller scale Tenrikyo was equal and excellent. It is a harbinger, then, of that wider encounter between the Arctic and many other kinds of spirituality scattered throughout the world and the great religions of this planet.

I have in this essay roamed widely: but the question is how is shamanism to be saved. I have acknowledged that it will have to be modified (as the great religions have had to be). Our world is changing fast, not altogether healthily. But shamanism will remain, we hope, as part of that treasury of *human* life and experience which enriches our humanity and our outreach to the divinity of the universe.

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Brief Bibliography of Ninian Smart

Born in 1927 Ninian Smart has taught in the University of Wales, London, Birmingham, Lancaster (where he helped to create Britain's first department of Religious Studies). He is the author of numerous books including *Reasons and Faiths, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* and *The Dimensions of Realization*. Until lately he taught at the University of California Santa Barbara.

Distinctively Californian Spiritual Movements¹

[This item has been re-keyed. Page and column numbers in square brackets have been inserted to indicate the original large double column format.]

In reflecting about the religious and ideological situation in California, and more broadly in America, it is useful to see it as shedding light on the general evolution of human worldview-formation. The broader world itself in turn sheds light on California. Before I come to analyse the key terms of the title, let us remind ourselves that new religions are not only as American as blueberry pie; they are as human as bread and rice.² They are not something odd which needs to be explained: the rise of new religious and ideological movements is the norm. You have to explain why in some countries there is relative homogeneity of belief at certain periods. Regimes often have to go to great lengths to contain and eliminate new movements, new symbolisms and new ideas. There are thousands of new religious movements in black Africa, a whole lot of new phenomena within the Hindu environment, lots of relatively new religions in Japan, and many new ideas brewing in Europe. I once asked a doctoral student who was interested in working on such phenomena to take a square mile of London and discover what new religions he could find therein. In a square mile of Mayfair (the richest area of London: heaven knows what he would have found in Notting Hill) he found forty-two. So we need not be surprised if we discover many new groups in California. As I shall argue, they are of great interest in throwing light upon human needs and human transformations.

First, to definitions. *Distinctively*: I do not here say 'uniquely', for very little is uniquely Californian. We live in a single interacting globe, and in any case California is a state of the USA, and is not cut off from its hinterland and from that area the inhabitants refer to, a little slightlying, as 'back East'. By 'distinctively' I mean intensely and typically Californian, and that leads to the next question: What is it to be Californian? California is literal geography, but it is also a state of mind; it is sacred space, in its way, and it is an ideal. What, then, characterizes life here in the far West? It has three or four major properties. It is not, first of all, just the West, it is on the Pacific.³ The Pacific makes people think other thoughts: as you gaze towards its blue horizon (blue, not grey like the cold Atlantic), you picture the East, and the Islands. The Islands signify, in the dream, love and leisure and lolling; the East enchants with strange philosophies and rituals. It offers enrichment of Western living. As it happens it can also make cars and videos.

The Pacific suggests the growth of a new, Far Western civilization, more innovative and relaxed than that of the Atlantic: Roosevelt and Churchill on a battleship are symbols of the old civilization. What or who will symbolize the new?

Second, California is at the leading edge of knowledge and its applications. In this enterprise the University of California plays a massive role, but plenty of other places are in on the act: Silicon Valley, Stanford, Palomar, Edwards Air Force Base, Palmdale, defence industries in San Diego and elsewhere. In Hawaii the lotuses grow too densely: California still has its dose of the Protestant ethic and of the post-Confucian ethos to sustain its knowledge industry. If we want to sum up the scientific outreach, we may use the word 'experiment': [163, col. 2] California is an experimental land.

Third, it is not surprising that it should also go in for existential as well as scientific experiments. It is a state in which many are a little rootless: this is not by itself bad, for maybe most of us have too many roots; but at any rate it helps to promote experiments in living. California is heir to many traditions, but it is not itself bound much by tradition. When existential ideas are experimental, they appear to be way out. That is why some Easterners tend to sneer at the Californian ethos. If California contains so many nutcases, how is it that it has such a vigorous pursuit of new knowledge? Anyway, as well as being intellectually adventurous, California is existentially experimental.

Fourth, California is ethnically very diverse. Los Angeles is the largest multi-ethnic conglomeration since the human race began. In this it reflects what is increasingly happening in our global civilization. Most big cities of the West are now complex in the same way. Different cultures live cheek by jowl. It is hard for any group to isolate itself. This foreshadows the evolution, if we are spared, of a single multicultural human community. This is in the context of a scientific and technological civilization which confronts all religions equally. It is also in the context of an increasingly individualist ethos, in which lifestyles are acquired as well as inherited, and older authorities are in question. In short, California is a modern multi-ethnic milieu and in some areas the Anglos, like everybody else, are in a minority. We enter a world in which every group is in a minority.

We shall see how these characteristics of California come to shape some of the new movements. I have called them 'spiritual', to use a wider word than 'religious'. Some important strands of Californian fashion are in the direction of therapies, such as varieties of psychoanalysis, which play a role like that of religion, but which cannot so easily be called religious in the narrower traditional sense.

Many new movements in the world are to do with problems of group identity:⁴ thus many of the independent black churches in Africa are secretly, so to speak, concerned with reaffirming certain, usually structural features, of the old culture (some small-scale society or groups of them) in the context of the powerful message of incoming missionary Christianity. It is arguably a major function of contemporary fundamentalist Christianity in America to restore what is perceived as the old American values with religious belief. Interestingly, because many people actually have a shallow view of science and a superficial grasp of the requirements of a democratic and pluralistic society, they are not uncomfortable in jettisoning some of the content of modern society (and neglecting its probing methodology) in order to square it with the Bible as rather literally interpreted. So they can weave together various motifs: the Bible, the preacher, the Sunday community, the ethics of the good neighbour and good citizen (as they conceive them), nationalism, a sense of certainty projected outwards onto the Bible and inwards into their existential

experience, and modern technology. These values are often in conflict with other motifs in the American and scientific (including by the way scholarly) world: the importance of dissent, the tradition of scepticism, the need for diversity.

[164, col. 1] Generally, new religious movements are a consequence of crises and new opportunities provided by the meeting of worldviews, including the social forces which are part of those worldviews.⁵ Sometimes the forces in question represent themselves less in total worldviews, however, than in worldview themes. Let me illustrate this concretely. The fact that California is a heavily immigrant state, with a continuous influx of people from the mid-West, back East, the Far East and Mexico, etc., means that it has the social basis for a strong atmosphere of individualism, since migrants are often able to make choices not characteristic of the milieux they came from. Again, the fact that California has large defence and other high-tech industries is partly an expression of and partly a cause of the receptivity to technological innovation in the State. Again, Californian education, especially its famous universities, indicates an investment in the scientific outlook as well as liberal studies. Its migrant populations help to reinforce tendencies to look East towards new Oriental lifestyles. And so on. Thus I would see new movements as exhibiting interfaces between traditions and such worldview themes, which I could list briefly as follows:

- science and attendant drives towards scientism and scientific humanism (scientism is the doctrine that all knowledge has to be scientific in a hard sense – modeled, e.g. on physics);
- technological innovation;
- individualism;
- the mainstream capitalist ethos (virtues of work, self-reliance, rewards for enterprise, etc.);
- the liberal ethos;
- patriotism;
- appreciation of alternative lifestyles (e.g., gay liberation, etc.).

Briefly, the mainstream Christian churches and liberal Judaism have tended towards accommodation with all of these items and themes, in an uneasy and not always stable blend, using the liberal ethos as the key. Thus liberal values strike a bargain with science, are open to technological innovation, are the key to patriotism since the USA is the world's greatest democracy, use the social gospel to soften the hard edges of capitalism and allow for individualism and alternative lifestyles.

But the new movements have involved the rejection of some or all of these themes. It is worth noting, however, that some phenomena exhibit ways in which certain of these themes may be taken up in particular ways by relatively strong emphasis on using one of them. So, in relation to technological innovation, both Aimee McPherson⁶ and Robert Schuller⁷ have been innovative, the former through her radio station (though she was not alone of course in exploring the new medium), Schuller through his concept of the drive-in church in the world's major automotive city. Their actual messages are not that

new, though they indicate trends seen elsewhere. Thus she was a version of the itinerant fundamentalist preacher, combining Protestant values, individualism and the rejection of science's daughter: liberal doubt. Indeed the key to fundamentalism as a new religious movement of the 19th century is the clash between the scientific ethos and the traditional Christian worldview, and the formation of a synthesis in which individualism translates into individual experience of salvation; science is accepted for the most part, but not its consequences; and Biblical Christianity, or rather [164, col.2] Biblicalism, is sharpened up. It becomes more Biblical than traditional Biblicalism.

It is, of course, obvious that, given new social conditions and new cultural invasion, such as that of Eastern cultures, especially during the post-World War II period, substitutions for fundamentalism can be made. Individualism can be replaced by the individual experience of liberation rather than salvation (being enlightened rather than born again); while some other scripture can be substituted for the Bible, e.g., the Gita; and science's daughter, doubt, and other consequences may be rejected. So Hare Krishna is, so to speak, 'foreign fundamentalism', and differs from mainstream fundamentalism primarily in its lack of emphasis upon traditional patriotic values. And though its pattern of salvation is individualist, yet the movement is communitarian (rather than congregational) in organization.

The first category of distinctively Californian religious movements I wish to look at is partly alien religious systems making their home in the West and in California in particular. The term 'part alien' covers the fact that some new movements are themselves the consequence of the interaction of East and West. Thus Bahai is a part consequence of the interaction of Islam and the 19th century Western ideas; Theosophy is a creative synthesis of Buddhist, Indian and Western themes;⁸ Sri Aurobindo likewise puts together science – especially evolutionary theory – and a modern version of Vedanta;⁹ TM combines traditional yogic themes and Western simplification and packaging;¹⁰ the Moonies are a result of the combination of themes drawn from Korean shamanism, Confucianism and evangelical Christianity.¹¹ So these 'partly alien' movements are means of bridging cultures. Their appeal is because of the alien, alternative element, for those dissatisfied with mainstream indigenous religions. Among those established in California and having their primary headquarters or point of entry into the United States in California are the following:¹²

Sufism Reoriented (refounded Walnut Creek, 1952); Theosophical Society (Ojai, 1922, etc.); Sri Aurobindo movement (Cultural Center, LA, 1953; Institute of Integral Studies, etc.); Sikh Dharma (3HO) (Yogi Bhajan, San Francisco, 1969); Subramuniya Yoga Order (San Francisco, 1959); Moonies (San Francisco, 1960); a somewhat anarchic addition is The Johannine Dain Communion (Da Free John, Clearlake, 1979).¹³

Of the neo-Hindu manifestations, probably the most important in the West generally and in the USA specifically are TM and (Ramakrishna) Vedanta, which in certain respects represent some central motifs, though Westernized, in mainstream Hinduism. The former, however, is but one among a wide range of concerns with yoga practice which is

a 'thematic influence' in the West rather than constituting a sect or denomination per se. I shall return to this topic of thematic influences later.

The second category of DCSMs is more properly alien religions in new places; that is, where religions not traditionally part of Western culture are present among Anglos and others who do not have these religions as Oriental or other migrants. Some of those distinctive in California are represented by the following [165, col. 1] organizations:

Zen Center of San Francisco (Suzuki Roshi, 1969); Zen Missionary Society (Mount Shasta, 1959); Tibetan Nyingmapa Center (Tarthan Tulkus, San Francisco, 1969); Buddhist Churches of America (San Francisco, 1971) – Pure Land; Nichiren Shoshu (Santa Monica, 1960); Buddhist Sangha Council of Southern California (LA, 1970); Vedanta Society (LA, 1895).

It may be remarked that various intellectual influences helped to create receptivity for such movements – e.g. the work of Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), whose anthology *The Perennial Philosophy*¹⁴ remains important; Jack Kerouac (whose *The Dharma Bums* and other writings helped to familiarize West-coasters and Westerners with Eastern thinking and values); action painting with its Zen background; the poetry of Ginsberg and Snyder; the writings of Alan Watts (1915–1973) from Sausalito;¹⁵ and so forth.

The attractions of the old alien religions in new places can be explained in part through their relations both to traditional Christian religions and to the worldview themes listed earlier. In different ways the metaphysics and sacred narratives of the Asian religions seem less in conflict with science than are some mainstream interpretations of Christianity. Hence we get such works as Capra's *The Tao of Physics*.¹⁶ The mystical rather than prophetic, numinous emphasis of Biblical Christianity is a promising alternative to those disillusioned with the Christian tradition. It also provides an alternative ethic to the aggressive, exploitative ethos of competitive capitalism and technological innovation. Its peaceful motifs were also an alternative to the war-oriented patriotism of the Right during the Vietnam conflict. It fitted in with individualism, but substituted a different kind of conversion-experience from the born-againness of the Biblical Christian. In short, it could combine easily with individualism, liberal ethos, scientific thinking, but was less inclined to traditional evangelicism, aggressive patriotism, technological innovation. But part of the movement also rejected rationalism and the scientific method: and hence the attraction of the *koan*, astrology, obedience to gurus and deviant kinds of science (which nevertheless tended towards a re-examination by mainstream science of some of its dogmas and sifting through imported ideas, such as acupuncture, some of which came to be accepted into the mainstream).

As I have said, the mystical or contemplative aspect of Asian religions, whether we are talking about inward yoga or the panenhenic emphasis of Taoism and Zen, represents an alternative to Christian experiential themes as presented in post-WWII times. Christianity was demythologizing and making the Gospel social again; it was also Biblical and evangelical. It did not at that time stress the mystical heritage of Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Vatican II (1962–65) represented other preoccupations – largely how to come to terms with the liberal ethos. If broadly we can distinguish between the *bhakti*

and *dhyana* traditions in Christianity it was the former kind of devotionalism which was stressed, coupled often with an evangelical hardness. Though for some who went East into bhakti Hinduism (the Hare Krishnas) and bhakti Buddhism (Nichiren Shoshu, again with that hardness), it was mostly the mystical [165, col. 2] *dhyana* tradition which proved its magnetism.

Buddhism in my view has the greatest chance of developing into a serious religion in the Northern world. Hinduism proper has a lot of cultural baggage, and some of it unattractive to modern Westerners, notably the caste system. The Hare Krishnas are interesting because they do at least immerse themselves in Hindu culture. For the rest, it is fragments of Hinduism which tend to come West, notably gurus of various kinds, bringing partial teachings. But Buddhism is culturally very adaptable. I think the importance of Alan Watts was that he was beginning the process of translating Zen into Western, non-Japanese terms. Buddhism does not exclude *bhakti* but its major heart has been *dhyana*, together with subtle forms of philosophy. These can blend well with Western values. Thus:

Buddhism can blend easily with the scientific outlook; the pursuit of liberation is an individual concern; it can be tolerant of alternative lifestyles; it, in its modern Western form, is in part the product of the liberal ethos; it is compatible with technological innovation.

It is, of course, critical of some aspects both of patriotism and of the mainstream capitalist ethos, but no more so than, in principle, the other religious traditions.¹⁷ I expect that Buddhism will be the main form of Eastern religion which will take root and spread, other than by immigration, in the West. Moreover its presence is reinforced by the appearance of the Sangha in a fairly strong form in California. But clearly Western Buddhism will differ from, say, Sri Lankan. There will be no place for the gods and agricultural rituals, nor much for astrology and folk-healing. Its shape will be that of the Buddhist modernists.

The Buddhist meditational ethos is part of the appearance in recent times in the West of that thematic influence of Eastern yoga which has broken the bounds of any one religious label, so that we have books being written on Christian yoga, Catholic Zen and so on. Some other such thematic influences have spread, such as astrology, Taoist-style environmentalism (blending with themes drawn from Native American traditions, by the way), etc. Gradually, Californian society and more broadly the USA is becoming eclectic in drawing on the religious themes of the world, and this itself is a significant trend: the new eclecticism (which we can see elsewhere – in sport, gastronomy, clothing, etc.)

The motifs of Eastern yoga blend with the concerns of the various new groups which can be summed up under the head of human potential, such as the following:

United Church of Religious Science (Ernest Holmes, LA, 1949); Scientology (Ron Hubbard, LA, 1952); Esalen Institute (Big Sur, 1960); est (Werner Erhard, San Francisco, 1971); Synanon (Charles Dederich, LA, 1958).

Some movements hope to increase human powers, cure diseases (drugs and alcohol), and draw eclectically upon both religious and secular forms of therapy and training. Some make a pitch for being thoroughly scientific, and the prestige of science is expressed in such titles as 'scientology'. In a way, some are simply offshoots and new forms of psychoanalysis as a religious system, which [166, col. 1] itself claims to be scientific, has its own sacred narratives, ethical values (integration, etc.) experience (through retrogression), rituals (the couch, group therapy, etc.) and institutionalization. It is an 'open' religion which can be combined with others, including Christianity and Judaism.

Finally, there is the category of new forms of Christianity, partially overlapping, as in the case of Hispanic espiritismo and Anglo pentecostalism, with Church structures; and sometimes relatively free of the latter and even sectarian – such as:

Jesus People (Tony and Susan Alamo, LA, 1966); Children of God (David Berg, LA, 1969); Worldwide Church of God (Herbert Armstrong, LA, 1968: *Plain Truth* since 1934, Oregon; Ambassador College, Pasadena, 1947); People's Temple (Jim Jones, Ukiah, 1965); and possibly in this category: Satanic Church of America (Anton LaVey, LA, 1956).

These have different characteristics. Thus the Jesus People represents a revolt against the liberal ethos, and an extremely uncritical acceptance of the scriptures. On the other hand, Jim Jones represents a communitarian type of belief which has many forerunners in American history as a revolt against eclectic individualism. The Satanic Church is a revolt from within the Christian tradition's categories against that tradition. Armstrong's organization is a revolt against the multi-ethnic milieu, and is a reassertion of right wing White values.

It will be seen that amid the pluralism of Californian society some groups wish somehow to embrace it, while others to a greater or lesser degree either reject it or at least eschew the relativism and unificationism which are natural consequences of such a situation. One might wish to draw up a rough schema in general of the reactions to the new features of our society – the growth of science and technological innovation, individualism, etc. Such a rough schema could be as follows – bearing in mind that negative reactions to each of the main features of modern California are only one of the factors in giving rise to the new movements. So:

Individualism, compounded out of utilitarian ethos, geographical mobility, urban living, need for critical stance in science, etc.:

consequence: privatization of religion, human potential movements, emphasis on individual experience;

reaction: communitarian living, obedience to leaders, etc.;

compromise: communities as means to self-fulfilment, loose congregationalism.

Scientific knowledge, technological innovation, critical stance:

consequence: scientism, rejection of religion, humanism, need for individualistic authenticity;

reaction: anti-establishment science combined with religion; Creationism, Religious Science; appeal of gurus and literally-taken scriptural authorities;
 compromise: liberal Christianities; new East-West blends, *Tao of Physics*, etc.

Experimentation with lifestyles, partly through exposure to other traditions, drugs, etc.:

consequence: pursuit of gurus, novelty in religion, [166, col. 2] attempt to cross cultures, etc.;

reaction: feel for Christian, Jewish, American roots;

compromise: eclecticism, Christian yoga, Catholic Zen, etc.

Pluralistic, multi-ethnic living:

consequence: relativism, abandonment of universal claims, tribalization of worldviews, etc.;

reaction: xenophobia, aggressive mission, absolutism;

compromise: neo-Hindu thinking, soft non-relativism (i.e., belief in truth but softness of criteria for determining it); religious toleration.

Nationalism/patriotism:

consequence: patriotic religion, New Right, Moonies;

reaction: pacifism, internationalism;

compromise: critical patriotism, if country stands for 'good' values, e.g., liberal pluralism.

These then are ways, crudely put, in which the different motifs of modern life relate to religions. I have omitted (save for secular humanism) reference to non-religious ideologies, notably forms of Marxism, but various blends of Marxism and religion are, of course, possible, despite their formal incompatibility, and exist (e.g., Catholic liberation theology).

The study of DCSMs leaves one with the conviction that their origin and development are simply part and parcel of that wider flux of religions which is stimulated by the social and other changes of modern life. It has recently been demonstrated that cult commitment thrives in correspondence with decline in church membership in the USA.¹⁸ The West is the place for cults par excellence. The greater freedom for individuals implied by mobility, a multi-ethnic and multi-belief milieu and lack of traditions, not surprisingly, gives scope for new experiments in living. But California is not unique: in some ways it is the wave of the future, since so many other places are becoming culturally plural, from Birmingham, England to Suva, Fiji. We shall see greater growth of new religions, compromises, reactions, and so on, as the globe shrinks. Reactions to the pluralism are not surprising, but they are perhaps dangerous, and certainties may be worse than the sceptical diseases that they help to poultice.

It is not surprising either that an educational system which tells us so often to be critical, to make up our own minds, to develop our own lives, should create a backlash in

which men and women fumble for gurus. We even seem, in Krishnamurti, to need a guru to tell us we don't need gurus.

On new religious movements

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Notes

1. I am greatly indebted to the help of Sam Porter, especially in assembling relevant data and bibliographies.
2. See Harold Turner, 'Tribal Religious Movements – New', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1974), vol. 18, and Bryan Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford, 1976).
3. See my *Beyond Ideology* (1981) for an expansion on points about the 'Pacific mind'.
4. Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred* (New York, 1977).
5. As in my multi-dimensional analysis of 'worldview' in *Worldviews* (New York, 1983).

6. Carey McWilliams, 'Aimee Semple McPherson: "Sunlight in my Soul"', in Isabel Leightan, ed., *The Aspirin Age* (New York, 1949).
7. A good account is found in Richard Quebedeaux, *By What Authority* (San Francisco, 1982).
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9. His best known work is *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry, New York, 1951).
10. E.g., Robert B. Kory, *The Transcendental Meditation Program for Business People* (New York, 1976); Patricia D. Hemmingway, *The Transcendental Meditation Primer* (New York, 1979).
11. Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie* (Oxford, 1984).
12. A most useful source, both here and elsewhere, is Gordon J. Melton, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 2 vols (Wilmington, NC, 1978).
13. See publications from The Dawn House Press, e.g. Georg Feuerstein, ed., *Humor Suddenly Returns* (Clearlake, CA, 1985).
14. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York, 1945). Also *The Doors of Perception* (New York, 1956) heavily influenced the spiritual drug movement.
15. Perhaps the work which best reflects his Buddhism is *The Way of Zen* (New York, 1957), and his general Bohemian ethos *Beyond Theology* (New York, 1964).
16. F. Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1983).
17. But Buddhism is not necessarily free of nationalism: see Heinz Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravada*; also my *A Theory of Religious and Ideological Change: Illustrated from South Asian and other Religious Nationalisms* (Awima State University, 1984).
18. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley, 1985), ch. 19.

II

WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS RELIGIONS IN THE MODERN WORLD



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Religion and Polity: Reflections on the History of Religions and the Analysis of Politics – A Question of Definition

The history of religions or comparative study of religion has many of its roots in philology, ancient history, archeology and various forms of orientalism. Such ancient and classical scholarship retains a perpetual vitality: if in this paper I concentrate upon more modern studies, it is not because I think my argument to be irrelevant to our classical heritage. On the contrary modern reflections are very important for reappraising elements of the past, if only because we need to know our own condition in order to avoid projecting it unconsciously into the past. I shall end my paper by drawing some conclusions about the application of the ideas presented to the classic traditions. Still, there is no denying that certain seachanges have occurred in human affairs during the two centuries since the French Revolution which affect religion and religions and therefore which affect the ways in which we may profitably pursue our field. Most of all there has been the rise of the modern nation-State, accompanied with various ideologies of progress, modernization, individualism and socialism. The rise of modern nationalism has involved the romanticization of history and rationality at the very time when it was being claimed that scholarship and social action were being put on a scientific basis. In a sense, nationalism became a kind of religion (or more strictly a bevy of religions), and salvation was to be seen in sovereignty and then material progress.

Now to say that nationalism is a kind of religion is to open up a whole family of questions about the relationship between our field and political science. It raises the question of the definition of religion. It raises the question of how far our symbolic analyses are relevant in the study of politics. It raises the question

*Ninian Smart is the J. F. Rowny Professor of Comparative Religions at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

of whether modern political values make important changes to traditional religions. I want in this paper to reflect on these three questions: on the definition of religion, on symbolic analysis and modern nationalism, and on changes which modern political conditions bring about in religion.

First, modern misgivings about the definition of religion can point in differing directions. Wilfred Cantwell Smith's famous critique of the modern concepts of religion and religious -isms can point towards centering our concerns in the field on individual faith-relationships and the like. On the other hand it undermines any easy or essentialist attempt to isolate religion from non-religion, in particular to draw a sharp line between religious and non-religious worldviews. If you hold as I do that it is useful to look to various aspects or dimensions of religion as typical features of religious traditions and religious life, you will find, as I shall illustrate later, that these dimensions are present in part or whole in so-called secular ideologies. If you hold to a more symbolic approach to the phenomena, as in Eliade's work, again it is not at all clear that the symbol-clad hierophanies do not occur in modern clothing among the ideologies and in the most impeccable of modern ways of living. So I conclude that we would be foolish to draw a sharp line round our field. Our field is the history of religions plus. If one wishes to make the point more strongly we could say that history of religions should be called history of worldviews. Incarnate worldviews, of course: worldviews in action, symbol and human living, and not just in mental attitude.

It is not unreasonable then to explore whether we can make use of our history-of-religions resources to illuminate some of the major forms of national and other ideologies in our times. The following observations are not original to me, but I hope that by bringing them together in a particular pattern I shall delineate clearly something of the religious character of modern attitudes. I hope also to raise some theoretical issues which come out of this treatment.

I have pointed to the modern nation-State as a crucial development in modern times. There are several indications of this. Europe has reshaped its boundaries so that, whereas in 1820 only about half of its ethnic nations had a territory of their own, by 1950 only three per cent had not achieved either national sovereignty or some type of subnational autonomy. Second, colonialism helped to spread the national idea, for a self-conscious national group in dominating others creates a counter-force of aspirations in those others. Third, a crucial consideration in much of nation-building has been the fashioning of languages (modern Italian, Greek, Czech and so on), and though a linguistic substrate is not the universal basis of nationhood it is importantly linked to the educational, and with it, the modernization process. Fourth, the nation-State has proved the vehicle of regulatory and fiscal policy, adapting populations to modern industrial and capitalistic existence. Schools have been the means of creating a new work ethos, new values of efficiency and citizenship, and loyalties transcending those of clan and family which stand in the way of modernization. In most ways the United States provided the most radical milieu of this kind, even if as a nation the U.S. is quite untypical: for the high school, through English, melted the diverse ethnic

groups into a single people, with little of tradition to lumber them or to block the way to economic dynamism.

Moreover, modern wars are focused on national conflict. There is a feudal and dynastic air to the thought of the War of the Spanish Succession. The Franco-German war of 1870 was just that: a war between two nation-States, one only recently emerged. Wars since have been sparked by national resistance or national chauvinism or fighting over the same territory. In the post-World War II period, think of the causes of conflict in Cyprus, Palestine, Algeria, Northern Ireland, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the Basque country, Iran, the Malvinas. The struggle was typically between ethnic groups, and in most cases the ideological or religious underpinning, though crucial (as I shall argue) was secondary: after all, the parties in question could fight in the name of Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, socialism, democracy and so forth. In vain have Marxist theorists tried to see the major conflicts of our time in terms of class struggle, even if economic motives have often been important in clashes. But economic motives themselves have to be ascribed to groups, and who is inside or outside a group becomes crucial. Such definition of the boundary between insider and outsider is often ethnic.

If we analyze the functioning of nationalism along the six dimensions of myth, ethics, experience, ritual, social institutions and doctrine, we get the following results, which show how there is a certain convergence with traditional religion. First, myth: clearly for each nation identity relates to the way it conceives its past. The narrative of the past becomes an important ingredient in education and in other areas of affirmation. The main aim of most history-teaching is not so much to inculcate scientific methods of sifting evidence, but rather to create a proud sense of the past of one's group of ultimate concern, the nation. Sometimes a prehistory is incorporated: an Old Testament to the nation's New—in the United States, British prehistory; for Italians, especially during the Fascist era, the Roman Empire; for modern Greece, ancient Greece; and so on. The history-myth can be the basis of territorial and other claims. It tends to emphasize the positive—the political, military, spiritual, intellectual and creative heroes of the past: von Gneisenau, Bismarck, Luther, Kant, Goethe, Beethoven in Germany; Napoleon, Foch, Rousseau, St. Joan, Diderot, Balzac, Debussy in France; Mazzini, Garibaldi, St. Francis, Dante, Verdi in Italy; Mahinda, Parakrama Bahu, Buddhaghosa, Dharmapala, Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka; William the Conqueror, Wellington, Cranmer, Shakespeare, Newton, Churchill in Britain; Washington, Patton, Lincoln, Dewey, Thoreau, Frost, Bogart in America; and so on. The history-myth points to victories, liberations, endurances of adversity, heroisms, idealistic programs. It often looks eschatologically to better times ahead.

It may of course incorporate traditional motifs. That depends. Russian history has a new beginning, of course, at the Revolution: prehistory, before 1917, thus has an ambiguous status, though in the Stalin era there was a relatively positive evaluation of past heroes, such as Ivan the Terrible, Kutusov and Pushkin. In any event it was hard to be too positive about the Orthodox strand in

Russian history, even if it served the basis of a Russian Messianism now affirmed in a new key. On the other hand, Sinhala nationalism is bound up with Buddhism, Polish nationalism with the Catholic tradition (hence recent tensions with Marxist ideology), U.S. history with religious libertarianism and the *Mayflower* tradition; pre-war Japanese nationalism with the Shinto past; Libyan nationalism with Islam; and so on. But whether history is seen as heavily intertwined with a noble religious past or not, it is certainly laden with symbolic force, and thus serves as the myth of the new nationally self-conscious group demanding or forming the State. There is, then, a strong mythic dimension to nationalism. (But liberal, scientific historiography can prove a solvent, as it does in regard to sacred history also.)

As for the ethical dimension: the modern State often inculcates a nationally based ethos in which some of the mythic heroes are exemplars, where altruism is primarily in-group self-sacrifice to the interests of fellow-nationals seen collectively, where one should strive to create greater production and wealth, and to preserve the nation in time of war. War especially proves replete with religious rhetoric: no man hath greater love than this ...; death in battle is martyrdom; blood shed for the country is a holy substance; the land defended is sacred. Treason is about the worst crime, and wider loyalties can be dangerous. I shall come back to a problem here.

It is interesting that the modern nation-State, while typically affirming the values of at least nuclear family life, tends to reduce the role of intermediate institutions, so that there is little which intervenes between the individual and the State. The citizen is encouraged to find his or her identity in the nation. The clan systems such as in Scotland and Albania, and tribal loyalties in emerging African States, have attracted government repression.

As for the experiential dimension, we cannot typically speak of some transcendental focus of piety, though the national essence sometimes is concretized in symbolic form (e.g. Britannia) or given abstract expression (e.g. the *kokutai* in Japan). But fervor of patriotic feeling is encouraged by the varied manifestations of national ritual. The ritual dimension is indeed well developed. The salute of the flag, the singing of the national hymn, the parades on national festivals, the symbols surrounding the head of State, the use of military marchpasts to show national power, the celebration of monuments and the beauties of the homeland, the use of sacral language about the people and the territory, the recital of history, the reverence paid to national heroes, shrines for such people, the pomp and circumstance of the nation's capital: these are some of the obvious indications of the importance of ritual in the expression and reinforcement of patriotism. War itself is often seen in the light of ritual, and serves as a solemn rite of passage for the nation's young and, if traumatic enough, for the whole people. Cemeteries for the war dead are among the most powerful of ritual places for the nation's pilgrims.

Some people are especially important for the continuance of State rituals and the reinforcement of patriotic sentiments: the head of State as ceremonial leader, of course; but the military and the teaching profession are the most important

functionaries in the ongoing expression of loyalty and national feeling.

I have left the doctrinal dimension till last. There is of course a single major doctrine underlying modern nationalism: that each nation (however differently defined) should have its own State or at least autonomy as a subnation in some wider configuration. But though this is a doctrine, it is not much more than a dogmatic and simple basis of practice in a world of sovereign States and liberation movements. Why citizens should have to give up their lives for Albania, or Britain, or Sweden, or France remains obscure. The nation demands great sacrifices—enormous taxations, daily protestations of loyalty, sending offspring to war. Not surprisingly nation-States tend to reinforce their dogmatic and mythically-underpinned ethic with something more universal. This is a potent reason why religious and ideological worldviews are brought in, especially in time of war, to reinforce nationalism. By a paradox universal messages are brought in to support sectional loyalties. Let us look at a few examples.

The Slavophil patriotic revival looked to a Moscow-based Orthodox faith to redress the balance caused by the decadence of European Christianity. French nationalism drew on the universal doctrines of the Revolution. The reconstruction of China was underpinned by an adaptive Marxism as interpreted by Mao. Likewise Marxism was the theoretical basis of Ho's drive for national independence. Indian nationalism was linked to the pluralistic Hindu ideology of Vivekananda and others. British chauvinism in the late 19th century was justified by appeal to the values of civilization and Christianity, i.e. by the ideas of evangelicism, liberalism and democracy. Nasser's Egyptian renewal was underpinned by a version of pan-Arab socialism. A different variety of Islamic socialism justifies Ghaddafi.

But in any case, of course, a nation's identity may be fairly closely bound up with a traditional faith, and so resurgent nationalism will naturally in such cases suck in the universal ideas and doctrines of such a faith. However, there is often a tension between the modernism inherent in the national idea and old-style religion, so it may be that the most potent use of older faith is by a modernizing restatement and reshaping of it. An obvious case is that of Khomeini, who has produced a powerful new and modernized version of Shi'a Islam, integrating older concepts into the program for an Islamic Republic built on the twin pillars of Islamic law and the modern State.

Of course ideology may be hooked on to religion for other reasons too: not just to give universal sanction to the particular loyalty. There are, for instance, reasons why socialism appeals to Third World countries. The struggle for independence is typically against capitalist countries, and on the principle that one's enemy's enemy is one's friend. Marxism has a certain appeal. Also, gaining sovereignty may mean interfering with earlier, colonial patterns of trade, and socialism provides the model for this. Moreover, the influence of the West has often been disruptive of traditional values and social patterns. How should a new sense of collective belonging-together be restored? The community-oriented doctrines of socialism promise a new mode of group identity. So the socialist alternative has charms for the new nationalist. It is therefore attractive to try to

combine tradition with modernity through some version of X-ish socialism, where X stands for the religious tradition: Buddhist socialism in Burma and Sri Lanka; Islamic socialism in Libya; a sort of Christian socialism in Tanzania.

Where the ruling ideology is at odds with national myth, the governance of the nation may be difficult. Thus strong-line Marxism cannot of course blend with traditional faith, though softer varieties of socialism may. Consequently there are severe tensions in Poland and Tibet; if Romania remains rather quiet it is because of a tacit compromise between State and Church, together with an age-old Orthodox feel for survival under alien political rule.

But in principle the most serious problem for nationalism arises when the contradictions between the universal religious or ideological worldview which underpins national feeling and the particularities of national sentiment emerge—e.g. in times of war when national aggrandizement runs counter to the deep values of the tradition in question. We can point to various examples. The Vietnam war came increasingly to be seen as being in conflict with the liberal (and Christian) values of traditional American democracy. Britain's chauvinist imperialism ran contrary to the ideology justifying it, and this sapped its resolve: consequently there was in the long run difficulty in resisting Gandhi's nationalist campaign. Marxist internationalism and socialist equality was in contradiction with the hegemony over Czechoslovakia, and helped to prepare the Dubcek spring and the attempt to break away from the wider Soviet empire. Even in a more minor matter: there was an ironic conflict of wills when Mrs. Thatcher objected to having the Lord's Prayer in Spanish at the Falklands memorial service at St. Paul's. Would Jesus not have thought that we ought too to mourn the enemy dead? More recently the violence in Sri Lanka in 1983 has led many to ask how Sinhala nationalism can blend so easily with Buddhist tradition. Very often in this and many other cases there are flagrant breaches between the behavior of chauvinists and the central values of the universal creed they in part pay homage to.

In a word: a universal set of doctrines and the myths and other dimensional embodiment they possess can be brought in as an ultimate underpinning of nationalism—not only can be but tends to be, for nationalism itself has, so to speak, ultimate pretensions. But such a blend is unstable when the universal is taken to justify the particular: what is for all humanity is captured by a group, but refuses in the long run to remain a prisoner.

But what about other religious traditions which are not universal? Some are pinned to a group because of being classical forms of ethnic or tribal religion, as in traditional societies in sub-Saharan Africa. Others again are pinned in a more theoretical way to a group: traditional Brahmanism to the upper classes of Hindu society, Judaism in so far as it is in special relationship to a people; Shintoism; and so on.

First, regarding traditional tribal faiths: they are typically presented with a special challenge when they encounter a universal faith. Christianity in Catholic or Protestant form has impinged, primarily through colonialism, on virtually every small scale society of the Southern hemisphere, and has indeed become the

dominant religion South of the Equator. It is easy for a traditional religion to succumb, not having the population, the literary tradition and doctrinal resources to be able to cope with the weight of the incoming religious force. (By contrast, Christianity has been much less successful in penetrating larger-scale civilizations with doctrinal and deep-rooted faiths, such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism.) The smaller indigenous traditions, when faced with the universal, can evolve a universal justification for the particular: or they may survive in heavily transmuted form through a variety of independent Churches, combining the structures (but not usually the content) of indigenous tradition with new interpretations of the Old and New Testaments. I say “structures”: for instance, healing is a common feature of African versions of Christianity (and let’s face it: there’s a strong emphasis on it in the Gospels), but not traditional “magic”—the old spirits lose potency in the face of Christ, but Christ is black, and his new prophets often have messianic roles. Two examples will suffice of the counter-universalizing move meeting the universal with the universal: the Torajas of central Celebes who retain traditional religion in the face of Islam and Christianity are now creating their own pattern of religious education in the schools (themselves participants in the modernizing process); North American Indian religion is increasingly being presented as a deep form of environmentalism. Exclusive and particularist Brahmanism has from time to time made universal claims, especially in modern neo-Hindu pluralism. Clearly the doctrine of “so many paths to the one Truth” favors traditionalism, giving a universal framework for particular allegiances. The move to universalize the particular is a modern way of moving from henotheism to monotheism. Judaism’s worldwide significance owes itself to this self-transformation since early times, in its encounters with large worldviews such as those of Zoroastrianism, Hellenism, etc.

It may be noted that ethnic religions tend towards a kind of federal pluralism. The logic of the argument for one ethnic faith essentially belongs to all. The apogee in modern times of ideological justifications of this position is in the neo-Advaitin Hindu ideology, to which I referred earlier. Interestingly such pluralism could blend with liberal democracy, and so play a part on that counterattack on British ideals that Gandhi and other Indian nationalists so successfully employed: turning the tables on chauvinism by using the ideals it used to justify itself.

This reminds us that modern Western democracy, despite confusions arising from monarchies and establishmentarian traditions, has evolved towards a practical and, in the United States a strong constitutional, separation of Church and State, or more widely of Religious Institution and State. This, the ruling ideology in modern democracy, involves a kind of credal neutralism: it is committed to the higher-order belief that there should be freedom of lower-order beliefs. This helps to develop further what already is a consequence of many economic processes, a strong individualism, in which religion becomes privatized and authority elective. This has obvious effects on the shape and substance of traditional religions. This new form of symbiosis between worldview and national identity

has its clearest form in the United States, of course, and will eventually no doubt erode the general theism of the existing rhetoric of civil religion: even that will be too specific for Buddhists and other non-theists. But it raises an important issue for us as practitioners of the study of religion. It is this.

Not only are we involved in a kind of neutralism from a scientific point of view, but we are controlled in a pluralistic society by a constitution and ideology which enjoins a kind of pragmatic neutralism. The kind of neutralism arising in our science is simply this: that the power of religion in history exists independently of what we personally feel about it. At least some of the time, though not necessarily all the time, we have to use *epochē*, that is, a structured empathy or informed inwardness, to bring out the nature of what we study. But in a plural society we happen to be the chief mediators of pluralism. The comparative study of religion, the history of religions, this field is involved in bringing to wider attention the natures of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Voodoo, Christianity, new religious movements and so on. We are professionally committed to being presenters and interpreters of the world's faiths: we are brokers of the spiritual from culture to culture and within our own societies. And though there can be no cavil at those who are doing something else: building Christian theologies of other faiths, interpreting the Jewish tradition to Jewish people, speculating about a set of values for a world culture—though there can be no cavil at such activities, which we also as alter egos participate in ourselves, the main principle of the history of religions as such must be a warm kind of *epochē*. So we have our own internal neutralism or scholarly impartiality. This complements the pluralism of democracy and the open society. This is also why our field is hard to practice in China, what was formerly East Germany, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other ideologically committed countries.

All this leads to a little paradox which bears on the practical relations between religion and polity in the modern world and our own professional role and logic. The presupposition of the effective exercise of our craft is the open and plural society: or at least the very methodological neutralism which we use tends towards favoring a pluralistic society. Many in the field are attracted by a kind of perennial philosophy. So our profession tends towards liberal democracy. It is at odds with the relatively closed mind of the Ayatollah Khomeini, the authoritarian doctrines of the Moral Majority, the ideological conformism of Albania and so on. Of course it is our hope by phenomenology to enter into the mind of the Khomeinis and Falwells of the world; and we attempt to describe religious societies non-judgmentally. But we know of course that our profession is at odds with the worldviews of many of those whom we study. So though we are neutral at one level, we are not so at another. Herein lies a paradox. I can only mitigate it by saying that a bias against bias is a differing sort of bias from plain bias. And add too that every worldview has to at least sketch an answer to the challenge presented by the social sciences and above all the methods and data of history of religions and worldview analysis.

I have, then, sketched some patterns of relationship between traditional religions and nationalisms. This is one main example of the way religious and non-

religious worldview components blend. The danger of our carving off a separate area labeled religion is that it will obscure the real beliefs and symbols of people: for rarely is religion as such the sole component of an actual worldview. People, rather, blend together a collage of values and ideas, not always consistently of course. In modern times the privatization of Western religion gives us the illusion that we can treat religion abstracted from the wider ambiance of symbols and ideas: forgetting of course that privatization is itself one of the means of blending beliefs.

These reflections suggest that despite the fact that we differentiate today between differing aspects of life, such as religion, science, politics and sport, we need also a more holistic approach to symbols and worldviews: for in practice people hold to clusters and complexes of symbols and ideas which interact on each other. Let me illustrate by a particular experience. I had to wait for about half an hour in the senior common room of the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch in South Africa, and I fell to thinking about what could be inferred from the furnishings of the room about the world of Afrikaner Dutch Reformed religion. The chairs were neatly lined against the wall, rather uncomfortably, and they as all else in the room were sparkling clean. All this pointed to Order. Over the mantelpiece was an illuminated scroll in Dutch. They recognized thus their Dutch and Calvinist ancestry. On the mantelpiece were two silver trophies the students had won, for Rugby Football. These pointed to manliness, vigor, strength, and Rugby as the emblem of Afrikaner male prowess. To the right of them were two pictures on the wall. One was a faded watercolor of a mission farm, up in East Africa. It pointed to the paternal Benevolence of the Afrikaner Christian, bringing light to heathen blacks, as well as modest prosperity. The other picture showed a veteran seminary theologian in black suit and black hat, surrounded by about fifty gray-suited neat-haired seminary students. They were all grinning like cats. It was dated for a day in May 1948: they were celebrating the Nationalist election victory, and were looking forward to the passing over of power from the English-speaking South Africans and their liberal Afrikaner allies to the "true" Afrikaners, a people whose hour had come after all the tribulations of the past. So the common room's furnishings pointed to Order, Calvinism, Benevolence, Afrikaans, Power. That was the constellation of values which lay behind and around the narrower teaching of religious subjects in the seminary at Stellenbosch. This is where the symbolic and historical studies of the history of religions as strictly considered should expand outwards into a kind of worldview analysis. It means that we are involved in a slanted anthropology—an anthropology slanted towards our concerns with spiritual and ultimate symbols and ideas—and one which does not ignore the historical roots from which the symbols have grown.

There is of course nothing reductionist in all this. The potency of religious nationalism, for instance, lies in the way in which spiritual sources of meaning and identity help to give extra depth to political commitment. They could not do so unless they had their own independent power.

The morals that I here draw about the nature of our field have obvious relevance to ancient as well as modern studies. But though we may wish to emphasize social and political contextuality in probing ancient history (e.g. through seeing, as Ling has done, the political milieu of the Buddha's teachings), the projection backward of these wider concerns is fraught, of course, with danger. For precisely because modern collages of symbols are modern their content differs from that of premodern ones. We are involved thus in a dialectic. We would never have made the amazing advances in the study of religion which the last 150 years, and particularly the last 40 years, have witnessed were it not that as moderns we have abstracted out that aspect of life we call religion; nor would we have made so much progress had not a more eirenic and pluralistic attitude to religions come to be so influential in modern society and education. But those very abstractions and attitudes which we as moderns wield and inherit cannot be projected backwards. Not long ago I met a Nepalese Buddhist monk who was proud of the Buddha's ancient connection with his country. I thought ironically that the Buddha was no doubt clairvoyant enough to foresee that many centuries after his birth certain modern borders would be drawn.

But if we cannot project backwards such secular forces as nationalism we can at least look for their analogues in different societies, and so build up wider collages such as realistically may have been the symbolic milieu of ancients. Old and new meet by way of analogy.

Religion and Nationalism in India and Sri Lanka

When a tradition meets a powerful outside force it can make a number of choices. In modern times most traditions have had the experience because of the explosive spread, especially in the 19th century, of a potent mix of Western ideas and forces: colonialism, capitalism, Christianity, liberalism. I want to explore here some of the religious and ideological responses along this frontier of the mind: what may be called the White Frontier.

In India itself the interplay was complicated by the fact that the subcontinent which Britain came to subdue was itself a *mélange*: it had scarcely coalesced as it did later into two or three major traditions. It was divided religiously, and though there was an inchoate sense of Hindu identity, Hinduism did not really achieve its status as a coherent, though still baffling, religious complex until after the establishment of the Raj. The situation was otherwise in Ceylon: Buddhism, together with its interface with the gods, was a rather homogeneous and organized religion there. It did not have to weld itself together as did Hinduism in order to deal with the external threat.

There are many dates to choose as arbitrary starting point for Indian consciousness: but why not 1866, when Aurobindo's grandfather, Raj Narain Bose, founded a society for the Promotion of National Feeling? At any rate, after the chaotic response represented by the Mutiny of 1857 — a kind of blind rejection of the intruding force, rather than an ideologically articulate counter to the West — there were now the beginnings of an All India movement which would often see in the Hindu tradition the most important ingredient of a new nationalism.

But which Hinduism? And what indeed was true Hinduism?

Broadly of course we know what emerged: the ingenious new ideology which helped in the national struggle and in the shaping of the modern Indian mind. It was the modern Hindu ideology as expressed by such figures as Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan, incarnated in part at least by Mahatma Gandhi. In it Hinduism's chief virtue is its embracing tolerance, but this is traced back to the very roots of the tradition and the fabric of society, at least as ideally interpreted.

Various challenges had to be met. First, there was the very fact of domination. Most conquered cultures blame themselves: often for not sticking closely enough to the unsullied tradition, and for becoming corrupted. But domination by the Other defined a goal, as everywhere: independence of the Other, or swaraj. Second, there were the missionaries and the Christian ethos of the invading regime and culture. Wilberforce could say: "Our Christian religion is sublime, pure and

beneficent. The Indian religious system is mean, licentious and cruel." The challenge of Christianity could be seen as requiring an answer in terms of truth, and a social response. For part of the problem of emerging Indian national and religious self-consciousness was awareness that features of the social system required reform if an effective drive for swaraj was to be made. As the century went on, this became clearer: for everywhere nationalism and modernization, of which social reform was an aspect, went hand in hand. Reinforcing Christian criticism of the Hindu situation was utilitarianism as a rational way of ordering society, and a major force in the British thinking about India back home. Third, there was a growing awareness of the past because of the work of Orientalists both British and Indian: this coupled with English-speaking higher education gave an alternative perspective to that of traditionalists.

When a tradition faces another, varied responses are possible. You can try to be merely traditional, and carry on as though nothing has happened, or if stirred to action lash out at the invader. But in fact these moves are bound to fail: an organized outsider needs to be met consciously, if possible with an organized response. This includes an ideology. An ideology is the brain and eyes of a backlash. If it is not a good ideology it turns out to be a fuddled brain and dim eyes. And a tradition defended conservatively with an ideology of traditionalism is no longer traditional: it is neotraditional.

In fact most of the Indian response was by no means strictly traditional in its neo-traditionalism. The need to deal with the Other requires concession and malleability. Because incoming modern Christianity was universal in claims, Hinduism had to see itself as more than a congeries of cults, a federation of rites, a mosaic of social practice. It too had to be universal.

It had also in some degree to be socially reforming and in some sense modern. But these requirements posed a problem: how then to defend the whole accumulated tradition? If some was to be sacrificed, how was it to be explained? We shall see in a moment some of the strategies of the Hindu mind.

Meanwhile let us note some of the structures of religious traditions as they affected the emerging Hindu synthesis. A tradition can be said to have a primordial phase, an early phase, a classical phase and a modern phase. If you are a Muslim, then the period of the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet corresponds to the first; maybe the first four khalifs to the second; the golden age of empire and synthesis the third, and the time from about 1800 onwards the fourth. In India we can look to the Vedas as primordial; the Upanishads as early; the classical Hinduism of Gita, caste, temple, *bhakti*, images, Brahmanical learning as the third; and the period from Akbar and after as the fourth. Now it is not easy to defend a tradition by saying that it started on the wrong foot. Of course in the case of Hinduism there was not really a beginning, and the whole idea of the Vedas as lying at its root is scarcely realistic. But older sentiment and the new Orientalism alike demanded: the first texts are the ur-texts. So it was not really an option to discard the Vedic hymns. They might be down-

played, but not jettisoned.

If you are then going to explain the corruption of the tradition, it is logical to look for it above all in its classical phase (so with the Wahhabis in the 18th century, with the protestant reformers, and with some of the Hindu ideologues).

Two movements of great significance took the line of going back to beginnings: the one can be summed up as “Back to the early tradition” and the other as “Back to the primordial tradition”. They were the Brahmo and the Arya Samaj respectively. But the former movement was heavily influenced in a positive sense by Western theism, and there was something in Dayananda’s charge that Brahmoism was just Christianity in disguise. Or rather to be more precise Unitarianism.

At this point it is also worth making a distinction between two types of foreign influence: the one positive and the other negative. Negative influence is where elements of the Other are taken over, but in a combative way, i.e. as a means of staving off the Other. Such negative influence has been widespread in the Asian world wherever the slogan was adopted “X in essence, but Western for use” (Confucian in essentials, Western for use, Japanese in essentials . . . etc.). Thus Western methods might be adopted or imitated, but with anti-Western aims. Now it is in fact doubtful whether the required distinction can be achieved: methods are one thing but methodology is another — that is the whole methodological spirit of science leaks over, so to speak, into other realms (not that Western society had or has quite resolved the problem — fundamentalist oil barons have the methods of our world but not its methodology). To return to the Arya Samaj: its educational and rather combative missionary spirit were Evangelical in method, and a response by imitation to the West, but they were strongly anti-Western. Moreover, Dayananda took the “Back to the primordial” rather strictly, except that he rejected most of the new Orientalism. For him the Vedas expressed a pure theism, and did not admit of images and the various accretions of medieval and classical Hinduism. The shape of the Arya Samaj was not unlike that of the Brahmo, but its substance was Indian and anti-Western; and while it rejected caste it kept something of the sacrificial ritual of ancient Vedism (the ghee offering). It also introduced the novelty of reconversion of Hindus through *sūddhi*, to try to win back converts to Islam and Christianity.

But we may note that such a ‘primordialist’ revival was as much at odds with conservative and traditional Hinduism as it was with Islam or Christianity. Another possibility was to revive somehow classical Hinduism, and modernize it, with a view to resisting the incoming forces of Christianity, Western rationalism, etc. We may call this the neo-traditionalist approach: but because of the nature of the challenge from the outside, it had to represent the newly interpreted Hinduism as (1) intellectually and theologically powerful; (2) compatible with modern science; (3) socially constructive and ethically appealing, despite problems and abuses; (4) defensible in the light of the new Orientalism. It had to do this in the light of the rise of a new middle class,

through the creation of higher education in British India through the English medium. Somehow the new ideology had to mediate between Sanskrit and English. But what after all was the traditional Hinduism? It was a mingling of elements: the Sanskrit tradition and various schools of thought including Vedanta; the mass of puranic and allied regional material; various ethical strands as found in the Gita, the epics, the *dharmaśāstra*, etc.; a strong tradition of *bhakti*, and an ancient yoga tradition; ancient Brahmanical rituals, but more importantly the cult of images, temples, processions, pilgrimages, together with household rites; and the institutions of caste and untouchability, plus the existence of holy persons transcending ordinary society.

Because of the nature of the challenge, and also because of the educated character of much of the leadership, the new synthesis had to draw upon the Vedanta and relate it to Western and scientific thought. Of the various schools of Vedanta the Advaita had the most appeal, because it offered a way of interpreting religious experience hierarchically or developmentally, and thus as it were of upstaging evangelical appeals to the experience of a personal God. It also could deal with the relationship of science and religion, because it had been traditional doctrine that testimony related to the Transcendent and perception to this world, thus creating a two aspect doctrine which could divide knowledge between the two realms. This was in contrast to the view of Dayananda, who saw the Vedas as containing science: which could of course issue in a sentiment towards the West that can be lightly put as "Anything you can do we did much earlier".

Advaita could be developed to mean that there is a higher contemplative experience which is non-dual and transcends the dualistic experience of the personal God found in the bhakti tradition and in the Semitic religions, including of course Islam. This hierarchical ordering of experience could be extended downward into apparent "idolatry", now seen as a fragmentary kind of apprehension of the Divine. The schema could give a new perspective on the unity of all religions. And Hinduism's chief offering could be its unifying and yet pluralistic nature: it could thus prefigure the world religion of the future. Already such ideas were ingeniously woven into the thought of Vivekananda and were to reach their widest influence in the thought of Radhakrishnan.

This was the clue to providing an ethical value out of Hinduism: tolerance. Another, related one, was non-violence, which Hinduism had absorbed from the sramanic tradition and which was to have its relevant incarnation later in the life of Mahatma Gandhi.

Toleration related as it happens to another dimension of the growing self-awareness of Hinduism and the Indian struggle for swaraj, namely the need to gear the new ideology to politics. I shall return to this. How did all this, however, leave the various elements of traditional Hinduism? Well: the Sanskrit tradition was taken care of by the rise of a new English-educated elite who could transmit Sanskrit values via the new linguistic and cultural milieu; the puranic material was

downplayed as being a mass of popular and fragmentary ways of approaching the divine nature; the old dharma was modified and modernized; the bhakti tradition was both affirmed and transcended; ancient yogic practices were now given a modern interpretation as the quest for the highest form of religious experience, East and West; rituals were left for the most part in place, but were treated as secondary; caste and untouchability were thought to be open to reform (though the varna system was reinterpreted under the head of the division of labor); the beginnings were made of creating a new breed of holy men, through the Ramakrishna movement and through the rise of a new English-speaking selection of gurus who became very powerful of course in the second half of the 20th century.

So thus there was created a rich form of neo-traditionalism, transforming Hinduism from an India-bound, culturally isolated federation of rituals and ideas into a universal, indeed hopefully the most universal, religion. The format was partly Westernized, through the use of English language publications, echoes of missionary methods, the absorption of Western philosophical vocabulary, the setting up of educational programs, and so on. Also philanthropic and social service reflected the Christian missionary style. Indeed it was his strong emphasis on social service that often brought Vivekananda into conflict with more traditional seekers after *mukti*.

I have called this version of the Hindu outlook “neo-traditionalism”; but it was really more than that, because it involved a novel synthesis out of India’s past. It owed very little to Western ideas, save in its social dimension: it was not an equal syncretism, drawing equally on two traditions. But it had some degree of the syncretic. But when two traditions, which we can call A and B meet, often it turns out that there is mutual influence, or influence at least in one direction — so B no longer is quite B any more, but can be represented as Ba. We can see the new Hindu ideology as like that, with ‘a’ representing the absorption of Christian and Western social concerns and missionary methods (up to a point). But in the case of, for instance, Vivekananda’s presentation of the Hindu tradition, it was no longer quite the complex federation from which he has started: but rather a new synthesis owing little to Western thought, but a lot to the desire to present a coherent and yet also rather traditional Hinduism in a new key. So it was not so much B as Ba — B as transformed by Vivekananda.

There was another ideological element there too which had to be accommodated, and that was something in addition to the Christianity and rationalism of the West: it was nationalism. By the end of the 19th century the British rationalized their rule by recourse to a doctrine of justified imperialism. This is nothing but the doctrine that a given nation has a right (even a duty) to rule other peoples. The natural concomitant is that nationalism spreads: peoples ruled see themselves as counter-nations. The new Hinduism fitted this framework, because it could be tied in a way to the soil of Mother India.

Even from the point of view of secular considerations India was hardly a unity because of linguistic and other cultural regionalism, while even religiously there were other major forces than Hinduism as such to comprehend, most of all Islam. Here Hinduism's claim to all-embracingness, according to the neotraditionalist synthesis could be translated into a pluralist and indeed State-secularist doctrine. This went well with the adoption of other elements of secular British thinking, such as Parliamentarianism and liberal thought.

So the new Hindu ideology could be translated into a wider religio-political synthesis: a more or less constitutionalist national struggle could be fought under this banner.

Most nationalist movements require not only an ideology mediated by a middle class intelligentsia, but also the symbols to move the masses. Preferably the national heroes should incorporate the common touch. In due course this was to be supplied by Gandhi — middle class figure appearing as a cross between a holy man and a villager. Before that Ramakrishna supplied for Vivekananda's movement a bridge to the masses. The problem for Indian nationalism with Gandhi was that he incarnated the requirements of the national spirit minus modernity: and the myth of liberation is tied closely to modernity. As it happened the problem was solved, but not in a stable way, through the twin leadership of Gandhi and Nehru.

Nevertheless the modern Hindu ideology was a remarkably fine vehicle for a kind of Hindu nationalism which escaped some of the problems besetting other nationalisms. Nearly all nationalisms, because they demand deep sacrifices in blood and eventually taxes, need a doctrinal component, e.g. Christianity or Marxism, as part of the superstructure, and the universal doctrinal creeds conflict with tendencies to national chauvinism (this was apparent too in Britain's contradictory benign chauvinism). But India could claim to be universal and particular without strain because universalism was part of her particularity, according to the new ideology.

Naturally such a universalism could create its backlash as the death of Gandhi would show. Nor has the new ideology survived too well as independence recedes. But it does provide a viable theory for the new State. Where it is being now strained is where subnationalisms are stronger, as in Tamil Nadu and the Panjab, the latter based of course on a more exclusivist religious base, and the former containing a strong strain of anti-Brahminism.

We may note a few ways where the differing components of classical Hinduism listed earlier can go their own way in a new symbiosis with the West. Vedanta could synthesize with evolutionary philosophy in the thought of Sri Aurobindo; yoga could be Westernized in various ways, e.g. in a sanitized form as transcendental meditation; bhakti could well up as modern guru-led movements in India proper, and as Hare Krishna, adapting Western methods, in the West; and a whole

new media-related group of holy men could give an all-India dimension to the old sramanic tradition.

In Sri Lanka

If India created a new Hindu ideology, Ceylon scarcely gave rise to anything so new or comprehensive. For though Buddhism was in poor shape in the early decades of British rule, it could transform itself through a new Western educated laity plus the adoption of many of the techniques of the missionary. A kind of "protestant Buddhism", as Obeyesekere has called it, was born. But there could, for all Buddhism's traditional tolerance, be no Buddhist synthetic universalism of the Neo-Hindu type. For one thing, Buddhism has no God or Ultimate Being. For another thing the history of Ceylon was Buddhist often in contraposition to the Tamils of Jaffna and the mainland. Yet the Sinhalese could not abandon their Buddhist coloring in the quest for national independence. They were however cosmopolitan in culture and the Ceylonese middle class could play the parliamentary game with aplomb and quite a degree of conviction. Moreover the acquiring of freedom came gradually and rather painlessly. So the upshot was a set of unresolved questions about the new nation.

Above all there was the question of Buddhist symbolism in the nation; there was also the question of how to redress some of the balance in favor of the Sinhalese, in so far as the Sinhala speakers had less than their proportional share in key government positions and the bureaucracy, services, etc. British rule had not favored the Buddhist majority exactly. The resolution of these problems produced others. The rise of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party produced a new Protestant Buddhist nationalism, in which to a great degree the Sangha became politicized. The results were predictable: the increasing alienation of the Tamils nudged emotionally all the time towards federalism and beyond. Moreover the new generation of high school educated Sinhala speakers scarcely had the outlets which nationalist politics had implied, and we thus saw the 1971 uprising: a new combination of socialist thinking and a kind of rural anarcho-syndicalism strangely akin to the ideology of the Khmer Rouge. When the gods send a Theravadin country mad they send it mad in a special way. It is interesting that Kampuchea, the JVP in Sri Lanka and the Burmese ruling group have all avowed isolationism, to escape capitalism by withdrawing inward. It is a national application of the Buddhist quest for spiritual liberation.

But on other fronts Neo-Buddhism worked well with the problems posed by Western influence: for Buddhism is itself modern in spirit and could easily be welded together with modern scientific thinking. But its symbiosis with the local gods and cults was open to question, and this aspect of the religious life of Sri Lanka remains to be resolved.

But the biggest problem is that there is a contradiction in Buddhist nationalism, save in a very mild form. In so far as a nation such as

the Sinhalese wish for some aggrandizement, then Buddhism makes a poor theory for that (as indeed despite history does Christianity). Moreover in modern conditions the old relationship between king and Sangha no longer applies. Nationalism is a vehicle for a new Western educated (or partly so) middle class, and no doctrine of balance between them as power and the Sangha has been worked out. And it is through the Sangha that the masses of Buddhists have to be mobilized: a condition tending to the subordination of the Sangha to a now partly secular culture.

So we have a paradox. The new Hindu synthesis is based on a doctrine of the Divine which has in many ways less adaptation to modern thinking than does Buddhism; but the Hindu-style nationalism has less of a problematic stance than Buddhist nationalism.

Meanwhile new syntheses and responses are on their way.

Editor's Note

The author of this article needs no presentation for readers involved in serious study of religious studies. Born in 1927, Ninian Smart was educated at Glasgow Academy and Queen's College, Oxford. Since 1967 he is Professor at the University of Lancaster and has for a number of years also lectured at the University of California in Santa Barbara. The study we publish he has sent to us in December 1983 from the "Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University", where he was lecturing. From among his many books three can be singled out: *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (2nd edition 1976); *The Phenomenon of Christianity* (Collins 1979); *Beyond Ideology. Religion and the Future of Western Civilization. The Gifford Lectures* (Harper & Row 1981). RSB is very grateful to Professor Smart for sending us this article and for accepting to figure among our Editorial Advisers.

Buddhism, Sri Lanka, and the Prospects for Peace

MANY OF US WHO have admired the Buddhist tradition are somewhat perturbed that Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka has taken such a militant turn.¹ Buddhism is rightly thought to preach a message of peace. Tranquility and insight are what make up the blessed state of nirvana in this life. The Buddhist saint surveys the world with equanimity and compassion, and rejoices with those who rejoice and sympathizes with those who are unhappy. Kings are looked on with uneasiness, and the Buddhist knows that the use of force—the stick, or *danda*—has its problems even when intentions are good. It is therefore disappointing that often violent behavior is given a spiritual imprimatur.

For me, something of this disappointment occurred at a conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists which I attended in Colombo, in the summer of 1984. Oddly, I had been asked by the Venerable Walpola Rahula to organize a seminar of international scholars, within the conference, on Buddhism's contribution to world culture. I found it a great honor, as I am not a Buddhist, but a Buddhified Episcopalian; I wondered how the World Council of Churches would react to having its chief academic offering run by a Christian-influenced Buddhist. Anyway, at the conference there were addresses by the President and the Prime Minister. There was no direct mention of the civil strife, and no attempt to hold out a Buddhist hand of friendship in a symbolic way toward Tamil Hindus and Christians, to show that the inten-

tions of the government were peaceful. I thought it was an opportunity missed.

It is, I think, useful to analyze the reasons for this rather militant Buddhist nationalism among many of the Sinhalese speakers of the island. I do this analysis not in order to cast a stone in the direction of Adam's Peak, but rather as a lesson to us all. I do not even want to give the impression that Buddhist-style nationalism is fiercer than the nationalism which has got mixed up with other religions. It may be that it is in the last resort milder. But the analysis is intended rather to bring out ways in which we may reflect on the relation between religion and internationalism, and more broadly between faith and peace.

The first point to consider is how Buddhism relates to traditional Sinhala culture.² While in classical times through the Middle Ages there were at least a fair number of Tamil monks, in the intervening period the Sangha has become virtually exclusively Sinhalese. In modern times, the division between Sinhalese and Tamils has been a religious one, save insofar as members of both groups have converted to forms of Christianity. It may be noted that there has been great intermingling between the groups, so that there is a considerable genetic overlap. Many of each group could pass as members of the other, if suitably dressed and speaking the relevant language. The division therefore is primarily a cultural one. But it has been reinforced strongly by the fact of religious allegiance.

Now in one way one might expect that this division would not be that severe. It is not really like the situation between Muslims and Hindus, where certain practices are mutually offensive. In that case one group eats beef but not pork, and the other may eat pork but not beef. One group loves graven images, and carries them joyfully in processions, while the other abjures them as blasphemous. One is inclined to honor images, the other to smash them. If you ascend to the doctrinal level, you could reconcile the two easily enough: Rāmānuja and al-Ghazali could converse together knowingly in heaven. But though the doctrinal dimension in the two religious traditions need not be far apart, the mythic and ritual and ethical dimensions clash, and often bitterly and badly.

It is incidentally important to realize that the tendency to look upon religions in terms of their ideas — a tendency very preva-

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lent in theological modes of study and research, and normal in divinity schools—is misleading, because in the real world religions are multidimensional. It is above all in cases of clashes and divergences in the ritual dimension that there is likely to be trouble. These are typically connected to differences of institution in the social dimension and help to reinforce living divergences which in times of stress may generate actual and physical conflict.

But to summarize the situation in regard to Islam and Hinduism: here we have bitter differences about ritual and mythic representations of the One. In high theology, however, they are close, since theism is the dominant note in both traditions. But in the case of the relations between Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka the opposite occurs. The rituals can be harmonized, as is seen from the fact that Hindu-style gods—rather effete, I would admit—have their shrines within the Buddhist temple complexes, while the holy place of Kataragama is duly attended by masses of both populations in search of material benefits. Buddhists have no particular animus at all against Hindu images. It is true that they may think that traffic with such images is of merely this-worldly significance, and that it does not bring you spiritual merit which can get you onward and upward to heaven or holy life in this world. But there is immediately no great clash or tension between the rituals of the religions. There *is* a mythic problem at another level, which I shall later discuss, which constitutes a great reason for the animus between the two groups. In the context, though, of immediate religious practice, the symbolisms of the two groups are not terribly conflicting, though they are of course different. Šiva and the Buddha can live together.

They *can* live together: but do they? I remember getting a verbal reprimand from the Vice-Chancellor (President) of one of the universities in Sri Lanka, when I made a suggestion about the new Parliament building. This is a beautiful affair in the old Sinhalese style on a lake some miles out of Colombo. Its interior is modeled on the British system of government, with government and opposition benches facing each other (perhaps a mistake). Near the building, looking at it over the lake, is a huge Buddha statue. I remarked that it was a pity that they could not have added Šiva, Christ, and perhaps a minaret, all maybe a bit smaller than the Buddha statue. I thought it would be more in consonance with

a plural society. The Vice-Chancellor, however, was very cold, and said that the Buddha was built on private land and people could do what they like with their property. But had the owner been a Hindu and put up a huge Śiva, there would not have been quite the same reaction.

Here is a hint of ritual clashes. In the meantime, we note that in regard to the ritual dimension there are not normally severe tensions. But it is in the doctrinal dimension that the great divergences occur. Buddhism is emphatically, in its Therāvādin incarnation, not theistic. You may note similarities between *bhakti* religion in the Mahāyāna and similar motifs in Christianity and the Hindu world. But the Therāvāda does not have its Amitabha and Pure Land. It did once in classical and medieval Sri Lanka, but not now in the Therāvāda. No doubt the cult of statues of the Buddha owes something to earlier influences from *bhakti*-type Mahāyāna. But the atmosphere of the religion is really very different, and the doctrines remain clearly against the positing of a Creator. These points have recently been systematically presented in Gunapala Dharmasiri's *A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God*.³ This is one of the reasons why the study of Therāvāda Buddhism is so crucial to religious studies. Like Jainism, it is a vital nontheistic religion which does not even fit into such ideas of Ultimate Reality as may be found in more monistic systems such as those of Śaṅkara and aspects of the Mahāyāna. This is why some of the dialogues between Japanese Buddhists and Christians are too easy. I have argued that Therāvāda Buddhism and Christianity and other theisms cannot be merged in the Advaitin style of modern Hindu commentators, or in the style of Christian unifiers like W. C. Smith and John Hick. At best they are complementary. Perhaps, to take the matter from a Christian standpoint, the Holy Spirit stirred up such divergent religions in order to keep both sides honest. If God didn't want religious differences why did she allow them to unfold? But that is by the way. The point I wish to reinforce is that at the doctrinal level there are severe differences between any form of theism, including Hindu theism, and the spiritual atheism of the Therāvāda tradition.

Another aside: the preoccupation among many Western scholars with the categories of theism, polytheism, and so on is natural

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enough. God is after all the key concept in the major Western religions. It is however not appropriate to categorize the Therāvāda from Western assumptions. Theism does not happen to be an important concept for such Buddhists. The notions of Buddhahood and nirvana are much more crucial. One could as well say that Christianity is an important nonnirvanistic religion as that the Therāvāda is an important nontheistic religion.

But to return to our main theme: we have in Hinduism and Buddhism religions which diverge very widely in theory—not just in regard to ideas of God, but in relation to such other issues as the applicability of the notion of substance. At the immediate religious level, however, their mythic and ritual behaviors are mutually tolerable and indeed overlap. Their ethical values are not very different. Buddhism stresses the experience of meditation among the elite, but an emphasis on Yoga is of course not absent from the Saiva Siddhanta tradition which is important among Tamils.

Mythologically there are divergences too, obviously. These concern the contrasting figures and stories about Śiva and the Buddha. But what really is most important here for understanding the enmity between Sinhala and Tamils relates to nationalism, which revamps an old tradition. It concerns the special relationship envisaged between Sri Lanka and the Buddhist *dhamma*. This intimacy between national identity and faith has been underlined and intensified in modern times because of nationalism. But the notion that the Teaching was specially entrusted to the Sri Lankans and more particularly to the Sinhalese is found in the great chronicle, the *Mahāvamsa*. Much of this text covers secular history, but it also includes legends of the three visits of the Buddha himself to the island and his associations with places of pilgrimage. Much of it is taken up with the battles of the hero King Dutthagamini against the Tamils. Later the same motif reappears in relation to the reigns of the great medieval kings, Parakrama Bahu I and Parakrama Bahu II. The history of the island was one of recurrent conflict between the Tamils of South India and the Sinhalese speakers of Sri Lanka. But the struggles were much more confused than would appear from a modern perspective. For one thing, Therāvāda Buddhism flourished in South India. For another, quite a lot of Tamils were in medieval times Buddhists. But from a modern perspective it is easy to see the Sinhala-Tamil struggle as essentially

a religious one—and this is how also it was represented in the chronicles. Thus Dutthagamini put a relic on the spear which he used as a standard and monks left the Order to fight.

Now such chronicles as the *Mahāvansā*, which profess to be history, like modern history textbooks used in schools, are a vital ingredient in the myths of peoples.⁴ We should not be deceived by the contrast we moderns sometimes make between myth and history. Essentially such stories help to give reality to a shared past and to underline the values prized in later times, namely, today or when such chronicles were written. They create identities through their reading and recitation. They can fit very easily into modern attitudes, where some may feel the fanciful character of heavenly myths, but are still beguiled by the reality of earthly stories. So the modern Sinhalese speaker is heir to these chronicles, and they reveal to the Sinhala two important “facts.” One is that there is a special relationship between the *dhamma* and the island. The other is the long-standing friction with the Tamils, represented as sweeping south to take over the island.

In this connection it is worth pointing out that the Sinhalese suffer from what may be called the “majority as minority” syndrome. Though they are the majority population on the island itself, they also see themselves as the minority in the region—because they are heavily outnumbered by regional Tamils. The island Tamils or “Ceylon Tamils” are ancient migrants into the island. They form a culture distinct from that of the South Indian Tamils of Tamil Nadu, and therefore from those very recent migrants imported by the British from Tamil Nadu to work in the tea plantations in the hill country. But because of contemporary conflicts the island Tamils have been driven toward solidarity with the Tamils of Tamil Nadu. Thus they begin to conform to the image in the Sinhalese mind of a great horde of Tamils poised to take over the island. From this perspective the violent JVP reaction to the coming of the Indian Army after the agreement which President Jayawardene and Rajiv Gandhi made in 1987 is intelligible. The Sinhalese vision of a minority Sinhala population regionally threatened by a vast Tamil majority, backed by the great power of the Republic of India, has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In other words, Sinhalese Buddhism in modern conditions is not quite what we think it is. We think of it simply as a form

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of Therāvāda Buddhism. But it is more than the Therāvāda. We tend to think of the Therāvāda in the life of the Sangha and the laity, seen as loyal to the Buddha and treading an upward path to ultimate liberation — a path delineated and expanded upon in the Pali canon. It is these things; but it is more. It is the religion of the Sinhala, who are sanctified by the special sacred relationship between the Buddha and the divine island. It is the religion which opposes the dark designs of Tamils seeking to overthrow Sinhala independence and so to destroy the *dhamma* in Sri Lanka. You can get at the real religion on the ground by doing anthropology, but you need also to be aware of its connection with a view of the special place of the Sinhala people.⁵ They have their own sense of manifest destiny.

In short, Sinhala Buddhism is a syncretism between Buddhism and national feeling, and in modern times this national feeling has been fostered by a modern sense of nationalism. This has borrowed some important traits from mainstream European nationalism. We need then to look at this, and give it some analysis.

Modern nationalism has been the main political force since before the French Revolution. It has fostered modernization, despite its nonrational and romantic roots. It has provided a scheme for coalescing relatively large and continuous blocs of territory and has often favored use of a common language to nourish a sense of identity. New languages built on vernacular bases have been fashioned by scholars and projected through universal education. The same education that could create a literate working class and a skilled middle class could also be used to recall history and foster a sense of belonging. Smaller segments of society were washed away in the wider national identity. The two most potent signs of this were the land or country ("My country right or wrong") and the linguistic heritage, but to these was often added a religious heritage. Poles not only spoke Polish but were Catholics, in contrast to the Lutherans of Prussia and the Orthodox of Russia.

Such a nationalism made its presence felt in Ceylon in the period between the world wars. But the political evolution of the country toward dominion status was steady, and the nationalist feelings of Sinhalas were not exacerbated, oddly enough, until after independence. Their main expression was the Sri Lanka Freedom Party under the initial leadership of S. W. R. D. Bandara-

naike and then of his widow, Sirimavo Bandaranaike. This was a fully evolved linguistic and religious nationalism, pinned to belief in the use of the Sinhalese language. The 1956 election slogan "Sinhalese only" was potent, and it scared the Tamils. In 1958 communal riots confirmed Tamil fears. Because Sri Lanka is an island it was easy to identify the sacred territory of the Sinhala land with the whole island, and this led to a confused and sometimes repressive view of the Tamils. Other minorities such as the so-called Moors or Muslims could be ignored, relatively speaking. But the Hindu and Tamil problem would remain.

The fact is that Buddhism in Sri Lanka, as it was modernizing through the thought and work of figures such as Olcott, Anagarika Dharmapala,⁶ Malalasekara,⁷ and K. N. Jayatilleke,⁸ failed to provide a positive theory of other religions. It did not achieve that remarkable synthesis produced by Vivekānanda,⁹ Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, and others, which saw a higher Hindu thought and ethic summarizing the Truth toward which all religions ultimately point. That irenic theory lies behind the pluralism of the Indian constitution, but no such ideology presented itself in Sinhalese Buddhism. So although Sri Lankan Buddhists had ample contact historically with Hindus, and though Vishnu mythically was supposed to have been deputed by Indra on the instructions of the Buddha to guard Ceylon, there was no clear way for Sinhalese to think positively about Hinduism or, for that matter, Islam and Christianity. This showed itself in the politics of the period after independence.

The new elite in India expressed this ideology principally in English, but Sinhalese nationalism in the hands of Mr. Bandaranaike led the retreat from English into an education system dominated by Sinhalese. This new class of high school graduates in Sinhalese formed the recruiting ground of the JVP, which staged the great uprising of 1971, so nearly successful. Recently the JVP movement, more explicitly nationalist in orientation, is at the forefront of violent agitation against the agreement with India. Its ideology is quasi-Marxist and bears strong resemblances to the thought of the Khmer Rouge. Thus the modern tragedy of the island is that it has the Tamil militants, notably the Tigers, and the Sinhala militants, neither group being much inclined to eschew violence. The peaceful values of Buddhism, much prized by great

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defenders of the faith in modern times such as Dharmapala, have been overlaid by the new tendencies to warfare and guerrilla struggle.

The problem of Buddhism is that it has syncretized with modern nationalism without itself evolving a pluralist ideology. The Hindus *did* have such an ideology to offer, and insofar as ideas count in politics, those ideas made a lot of sense in trying to evolve a pluralist democracy in the Republic of India. But in Sri Lanka the Buddhist majority has made few political concessions to the Tamils, until perhaps too late. The Tigers in fact forced a measure of federalism on the government, and it is that which has been the basic thrust of Tamil policy throughout the period from World War II onwards.

It may be noted that the constitution which the British left in place was modeled on Westminster. Time and again this model has proved defective in the face of ethnic divisions—for instance in Northern Ireland and in those African countries which have opted for a one-party system because of dissatisfaction with the Westminster model. The reason ethnicity is a problem is that where parties form along ethnic lines, it is less easy to perceive the opposition as loyal. The Westminster system works with values coalitions, which are different from ethnic divisions.

What has happened is that Buddhist nationalism has gloried in a classical form of the Buddhist faith in Ceylon, namely, the great Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. It has therefore seen the role of government as living in a kind of symbiosis with the Sangha. The ancient kings became great patrons of and correctors of the Order. In a democratic state as at present there is no king or Parakrama Bahu, but analogously to the ancient monarchs, the President and Prime Minister need popular support to rally the masses to their vision of a Buddhist society. This inevitably brings in the monks, whose support is crucial since they are potent vote-influencers in rural Sri Lanka. The politicization of the Order is a dangerous distraction from the true purposes of the Sangha. While there has been a great revival of those true purposes, through the development of meditation, the dissemination of Buddhist learning, and so on, there has also been an inflaming of the passions of monks in a patriotic mode.

Can a religion avoid these tendencies? Where stands Buddhist

universalism in the face of nationalist politics? This is a general question which religions and ideologies have to face. Marxist universalism has been split by the conflict between nations, such as China and Vietnam, and inside Yugoslavia. Christian universalism has notoriously been the victim of conflicts in Europe and elsewhere in modern times.

It is not easy for an emerging Buddhist universalism to take the Hindu path. While some modern approaches, such as those of Guénon¹⁰ and Hick,¹¹ seek a transcendental unity of all religions, this does not to my mind resolve the problem. This is so for various reasons. First, as we have seen, Therāvāda Buddhism is itself a challenge to unifying credos. Second, there is also the vital question of secular worldviews. There is the question of what the religionist can say to the Marxist or the scientific humanist. Even if religions achieve some kind of notional unity, this leaves anti-religious systems of thinking and acting out of account. Does one therefore have to despair of some theory of living together on the planet?

It may of course be commented that all we can do in forums like this one is to discuss ideas, and ideas are not potent. It is perhaps scratching at the surface of the problem to try to form a philosophy of living together. Beyond that the human race has to live together.

Of course; but ideas remain vital. It is our vision of the future which helps shape it. The Nazi phenomenon, the growth of Buddhism in Japan, the Meiji restoration, the October Revolution, 1776 – all these powerful moments in history, for better or worse, were shaped by ideas. Without these ideas, things would have turned out differently. Without the Nazi ideology the horror of the Holocaust would not have occurred, even if anti-Semitism, itself ideas-driven, had caused its own terrors. Without Marxism the October Revolution would have been merely a *coup d'état*. Without the Enlightenment the events of 1776 would merely have been a colonial rebellion.

Now if such a peace-oriented faith as Buddhism can get itself drawn into bitter warfare and violence, do we have much hope of moderating human aggression? Yet we note also cases of peaceful coexistence where once it was absent – notably in Europe, and before that in other regions. Now, war in North America is vir-

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tually unthinkable, as in Scandinavia and through much of Latin America. Where there are troubles they have to do chiefly with unresolved ethnic tensions. The civil war in the Sudan is the struggle of a non-Muslim minority against, among other things, the universalization of Islamic *shari'a*. In Northern Ireland two groups conceiving of their mythic history differently have not reached a *modus vivendi*. In Israel there is the struggle between Palestinians and Jews. In Iraq and round about, the Kurds have been struggling for self-determination. In the southern Philippines the Muslim minority is fighting for independence. In Burma, the Karens fight; and in the Punjab, Sikh militants latch on to the dissatisfactions of the Sikhs in the wider fabric of Indian polity. In Zimbabwe recent violence has tainted relations between the Ndebele and the dominant Shona majority; and in Ethiopia Eritrea wishes for homogeneous imperial government. Unless we resolve such questions of ethnicity we are going to have much more trouble in the world. Now in the Soviet Union there are various open struggles—in the Baltic region and among the Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

Now a theory of the transcendental unity of religions might help in some cases. But as I have noted, the secular ideologies are also strong. Often Marx has been the inspiration of modernizing nationalist uprisings. Moreover, at one level the “all religions are equal” thesis does not work. It is resisted often by traditionalists, who may say, like Monsignor Ronald Knox, “comparative religion makes people comparatively religious.” Is there an alternative irenic theory which has a greater measure of perceived truth?

We may note that there are often only two ways of resolving interethnic disputes peaceably. One is to give the oppressed group independence. Another is federalism. Even so, there will remain—and increasingly—the problem of ethnic minorities not distributed territorially. Some variation of the federal solution might be applied, by analogy perhaps with the Ottoman millet system. But it would be important to stress equality with otherness. In other words, one must respect varying cultural traditions. Such informal federalism begins to grow up in regions, such as Scandinavia, and wherever the mutual relations between nations are settled. Now in all this one of the binding, but at the same time dividing, forces is worldview, or ideology. As something which spans ethnicity, Christianity is a positive force for peace; in tension with

Islam, in Lebanon, it is a reinforcement of conflictual tendencies.

Now our aim may be stated as a system of ideas and ultimately of political arrangements which make the human race the community of ultimate concern — transcending and eventually dampening feelings of ethnic identity. Can we hold this aim while acknowledging the divisions between religious and other worldviews? Can we hold this in a nonrelativistic manner? For the notion of truth and the right way of living are built into worldviews, and we cannot reconcile them by wiping out their basis. Even if we reject all available worldviews it would still leave us with the notion that the worldview remaining (ours) which occupies the wasteland is somehow the truth or right. In short, can we provide a theory which would be acceptable to Therāvādins as well as Muslims, and to Christians as well as Marxists?

It may be commented here, though, that some people are fanatics and prize their causes above humanity. They think that death with honor is a fine norm and are certain of the superiority of their beliefs to those of others. Sooner or later, of course, we must bump into the question as to who is entitled to use force. At present it is, by and large, the state and the nation. Am I implicitly arguing for a world government in saying that humanity is the community of ultimate concern? I am not sure. There can be uses of force, through the United Nations, which help to dampen conflicts, and which fall far short of world government. It would be dangerous to empower anyone as world ruler. It would seem to me better to tread the path of informal federalism, whereby sovereign states are drawn into working with one another in peace and can form ever larger and larger conglomerations. There are real advantages in preserving cross-cutting ways of dealing with world affairs — nation-states, multinational companies, transnational agencies, religious organizations — all cutting across boundaries. We might call this “transnationalism.” We can now frame our question about worldviews. How can religious and other worldviews contribute to transnationalism? I suggest they can do as follows:

(1) They can encourage ecumenism each within each, because ecumenical modes of activity typically cross ethnic boundaries more fully than do nonecumenical attitudes.

(2) They can focus on the humanistic aspects of their own

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traditions. Every religion has some notion or other of treating humans, and living beings in general, with respect. Similarly the humanistic aspects of Marxism and other secular worldviews can be underlined.

(3) They can emphasize ways in which each worldview has openings in its imagination for positive appraisals of other value systems.

(4) They can encourage friendly meetings with representatives of other worldviews.

(5) They can cooperate in ethical and social endeavors where concerns overlap, such as the spread of literacy.

(6) They can recognize that the underpinning of each tradition has its “soft” aspect. That is, a believer may be thoroughly dedicated and may have certain faith or certitude in her tradition’s or worldview’s teachings, and yet recognize that in a public, world community her faith is underpinned by nonconclusive, though maybe good, reasons.

On the basis of such moves a theory of universal toleration may be built. In other words, the spread of one’s own viewpoint will be no longer a matter of force, but rather a matter of persuasion and debate. This debate need not be verbal. It may be a debate expressed in living examples, in qualities of life and the fruits of one’s faith – a competition of saints.

This approach asks no worldview to abandon its own position or to cease from hope, if it so wishes, of becoming the universal belief of human beings. But it sets that hope in perspective and the means of achieving expansion under control. This suggestion is itself a kind of meta-worldview, depending on the notions that humanity is our community of ultimate concern and that worldviews can only be softly confirmed at best. Such a meta-worldview has the advantage that it gives as much as possible to the lower-order actual worldviews. It does not prevent a person from being a Buddhist or a Muslim, but only restricts the mode in which she holds to her worldview. To put it crudely, you can have 80 percent or more of your worldview, and so can everyone else. This contrasts with situations of forcible dominance where you can at best keep 20 percent. In brief, I here advocate soft non-relativism in a transnationalistic framework.

How would such an attitude affect Buddhism in Sri Lanka?

I think that it needs to work more on some of the items above, especially toward a theory under (3), seeing positive aspects of the Hindu heritage which are important for Buddhists to heed. The political message is that Sinhala Buddhist nationalism has to accept a federal arrangement. Only under such circumstances is it at all reasonable to hanker for a rebirth of the glory of classical Buddhist civilization.

There is much to build on, and this will be seen more clearly when the heat is gone and the dust has settled after the present conflict. There is the toleration of the great ideal emperor Asoka, who was the father of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka. There is the rightful defense of Buddhist philosophy as being in line with modern science which was so well expressed by the late K. N. Jayatilleke, among others. This in turn implies an openness to other points of view. Such openness is necessary in the world if science is to go on flourishing and developing. There is the heavy traditional emphasis on not being too entangled in views, that is, not being too defensive in clinging to your own viewpoint. There is the peaceful and democratic ethos of the early Sangha — and much else besides.

The moral of the present crisis in Ceylon, as far as Buddhism goes, is that Buddhism has got too heavily enmeshed with Sinhala nationalism. Every religion is liable to such syncretism. As we saw, in an important way every worldview is syncretistic: Protestant evangelicalism with American patriotism; Marxism with a variety of national identities; Catholicism with the Polish struggle; Islam with Iranian nationalism — and so on. It is inevitable that such entanglement will happen to some degree. Ours is the age of nationalisms. But they can be tamed by being given some of their head. Football matches in due course substitute for wars. We do not suppress nationalism by trying to wipe it out, but by giving it some room in which to breathe. Loyalty to a national group need not be ignoble — but willingness to kill and oppress other humans because they do not belong to your group *is* ignoble.¹²

Above all, it seems to me, we must experiment in the world with new styles of and arrangements for pluralism. At the same time openness to other traditions and viewpoints is needful. Here religions and ideologies in particular need encouragement toward openness in their teaching. We can have a vision of a world com-

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munity with great internal variety and many worldviews in harmonious competition. We can look toward a polydoxic world.

NOTES

1. See James Manor, ed., *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1984); and S. J. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
2. Richard Gombrich, *Therāvāda Buddhism* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988); despite its title this book is overwhelmingly about Sri Lanka.
3. Gunapala Dharmasiri, *A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God*, 2d ed. (1988).
4. See my discussion in Peter Merkl and Ninian Smart, eds., *Religion and Politics in the Contemporary World* (New York: New York University Press, 1983).
5. Richard Gombrich felicitously combines historical and anthropological approaches in *Precept and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
6. Anagarika Dharmapala, *A Message to the Young People of Ceylon* (1912).
7. See N. A. Jayawickrema, "Malalasekara," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987).
8. K. N. Jayatilleke, *The Message of the Buddha*, ed. Ninian Smart (New York: Free Press, 1972).
9. See George M. Williams, *The Quest for Meaning of Swami Vivekānanda* (Chico, Calif.: New Horizons Press, 1974).
10. Pierre-Marie Sigaud, *René Guénon* (1984).
11. See especially John Hick's Gifford Lectures: *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).
12. Ninian Smart, *Beyond Ideology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

The Importance of Diasporas

[This item has been re-keyed. Page numbers in square brackets have been inserted to indicate the format of the original.]

The Jewish diaspora is the most important diffusion of people and ideas in the history of the world to date. But there are other diasporas that have hardly attracted the attention of students of religions, although they are playing a more and more vital part in the revivification of their home religions. Thus there are diffusions of Hindus overseas from India, often substantial in number, in such places as Fiji, South Africa, Kenya, Guyana, the UK. Also, there are important groups of Sikhs in Canada and the UK and elsewhere, who have had a financial and ideological role in recent stirrings in the Punjab. Because of the oppression of Buddhist religion in Tibet, we have witnessed, in the last quarter of a century, the arrival of significant numbers of Tibetan refugees in India, Nepal, Britain, the USA, Canada and elsewhere. In some places, the most likely form of Buddhism a Westerner is likely to encounter at home is Tibetan. There are, outside of the main Islamic territories, significant minority communities of Muslims, e.g. in parts of Europe, in other Western countries, in South Africa, East Africa and the Caribbean, and elsewhere. Chinese and Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese forms of Buddhism are widely dispersed in North America, and Chinese religious culture is central in Singapore and important in Malaysia and Indonesia, etc.

In many of these diasporas, there is an element of exile. In some cases, it is the consequence of the harsh economic realities in which overseas communities have grown up (as in the case of the indentured laborers of the post-slavery British Empire). In other cases political persecution has driven folk abroad. But sometimes it is a more casual matter; people have migrated without extreme pressures. Thus many Algerians in France and Turks in Germany have found it attractive to go to the host countries for reasons of economic opportunity. Migration [289] has, for some, been a matter of opportunity rather than life-or-death necessity. Even so, there remains a sense of exile when persons come out of their own culture and settle in among an alien majority in an adopted country.

These diasporas are important for us to study, and this for several reasons. The first is that it can provide a clue to patterns of religious transformation. You may find similar developments in different communities, which reflect parallel solutions to parallel problems. Such changes may also pinpoint problems in the religion which make its adaptation to a new environment difficult. So the first reason has to do with adaptation. Second, diasporas may themselves affect the home-based religion. Thus Sikh militancy is strong in Britain, and this helps to stoke the fires of passion in the Punjab. Migrants

often become wealthier than those left behind, and they may also be more exposed to education and foreign influences, and can export such influences back home. Third, the phenomenon of the diaspora is important because of its great incidence in the modern world. In Los Angeles, California; in Birmingham, England; in Sydney, Australia; in Frankfurt, Germany, and numerous other major cities of the world multiethnicity is now commonplace.

Incidentally, this diaspora phenomenon is also a great opportunity for students of religion. It is possible, up to a point, for students to do much of their fieldwork at home. You do not have, in many areas, to go far to meet Tibetans or Iranian Shi'is, or Japanese Pure Land Buddhists. This presence of other religions may help us, by the way, to be more realistic in appraising Western homegrown religions, that is Christianity and Judaism especially: we may be more open to seeing how they work on the ground, rather than just in the text. (Generally speaking, in my opinion, Christianity and Judaism are the religions least well taught because of seminary-type assumptions still guiding our curricula. A strong dose of sociology and anthropology, or history of religions on the ground, would inject color and realism into religious studies in relation to these "homegrown traditions.") Recently, at the University of California Santa Barbara, we have instituted a program called "Religious Contours of California," funded substantially by the California Council for the Humanities. This seeks to encourage the teaching of world religions by beginning with the forms of religion found in California itself: Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and so on, exemplified in various ways through the influx of Hindus, East Asians, and [290] Mexicans, as well as more traditional migrants into the State. This is a way of using diasporas as bridges to their native or classical manifestations. It has incidentally revealed extensive areas for research. All this focuses on the diasporas, and does not take into account the way some religions have jumped their more traditional boundaries and taken root among new ethnic groups: Buddhism among Anglos or White people, Islam among American Blacks, and so on.

However, it is to the more theoretical aspects of the study of diasporas that I wish to draw attention in this paper. What are the kinds of religious changes one might expect? And what changes are found on the ground? Much obviously depends on the host societies. The migration of Christianity into India, in ancient times, and its survival in South India to the present time would imply some degree of adaptation to the most important structural feature of Indian society, that is to the caste system. In fact this assumption seems borne out by experience. However, we may note in the modern period a special feature of the inter-cultural contact implied by the creation of diasporas – that because of European and American power during the colonial experience, certain powerful ingredients of Western life and values became a pervasive presence virtually throughout the world. Even countries such as Japan and Thailand, which did not fall under Western rule, had to absorb many Western values in order to retain their independence; China, though not formally conquered, was nevertheless greatly penetrated by Western economic and educational forces. So, when new diasporas were being created, either during or shortly after the colonial period, the people involved had already had some experience of the host societies before they migrated. Or else they migrated from one area of Western

domination to another, as with Indian laborers going to the sugar plantations of Natal or Guyana. In any case, there was a powerful exposure to Western values, either directly in the colonizing host countries or, at some remove, in Western-colonized countries.

In the last twenty-five years a different dynamic has also been important. Travel has become much easier, so even rather poor communities can maintain cultural contact with the homeland more easily. This has combined with other factors to encourage a kind of ecumenism. There are world organizations for every major tradition and sub-tradition. There is a sign of this, for instance, in the recent emergence of the paper *Hinduism Today*, which styles itself as "an international bimonthly newspaper fostering Hindu solidarity among 650 million members of a global religion." Such a consciousness of belonging to a world community has grown considerably in very recent times. Consequently, the divergences between diaspora and home communities are diminishing.

The need of other cultures to cope with Western values (or things perceived sometimes as Western, though in principle of universal scope, such as science and technology) meant that sometimes new religious movements from the homeland, also directed towards dealing with this problem, could flourish in the diaspora. Thus, in Fiji, Natal and elsewhere, the Arya Samaj has great vigor. Its nineteenth-century religious fundamentalism ("back to the Vedas") gave it a conservative, even nationalist, attraction which served overseas communities well. Because of the peripheral character of exiles, they often feel the need to be more patriotic or traditional than the traditionalists. On the other hand the simplification of Hinduism from a ritual perspective could be helpful in a situation of exile, where the maintenance of traditional rituals is difficult. It was difficult in the Hindu case for a number of reasons. First, indentured laborers were a relatively deprived group who nevertheless needed elite Brahmins for the proper performance of public rites. Second, the Hindu system is not one of much formal training. Customs and rituals are handed down from one generation to another by a kind of social osmosis. The rupture of this osmosis, implied by transportation overseas, proves to be a problem in Hindu education. Until recently, overseas Hindu groups were inadequately served for public rituals. Only in the last twenty-five years (what we may call the Global Period of world history) have provisions for ritual performance improved. Also, diaspora Hindus have begun building temples: *Hinduism Today*, in its January 1, 1986, issue, lists 47 temples in the USA, but the list is very incomplete. In a period of consolidation, then, there may be some revival of Hindu practice; but before the Global Period there was a long stretch when the survival of orthodox Hinduism was more problematic. Indeed, social changes – in Natal, for example, those brought about by a housing policy based on units suitable for accommodating the nuclear but not the extended family; and the growth of individualism, already favored by capitalist and consumer values, and by urbanization – have provoked a crisis for traditional Hinduism. There is an increasing proportion of ex-Hindu Indians who have become Pentecostal Christians. This allows them to adapt *bhakti* religion to a more consciously individualistic religious pattern. We may also note that traditional Hinduism, in losing its old osmotic potential, has become somewhat unintelligible to a new class of young people growing up in a modern environment.

But, as we have seen the Arya Samaj has grown in vigor in these circumstances, as have other new movements, including – for the better educated – the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math and Mission. So we may say that some of the pioneering movements of the nineteenth century, which involved reaction to Western values then present in India through the British occupation, have had an important role to play in helping the diaspora Hindus to adapt themselves to a new environment.

It might also be an interesting research project to see how far the various themes of the Hindu tradition are present in a non-Indian environment – themes such as caste, yoga, *bhakti*, pilgrimage, temple rituals, austerity (*tapasya*), wandering holy men, instruction in the scriptural traditions, regional variation, pundits, a strong sense of purity and impurity, household rituals, veneration of the cow, the practice of astrology, belief in reincarnation, the importance of acquiring merit, etc. These themes, which are woven together into the complicated fabric of Hinduism in India, do not all travel equally easily to new environments. The very act of going overseas implies something about purity and loss of caste, for instance. Though caste is not absent as a phenomenon in the diaspora, it is less rigidly observed (or, as an Indian sociologist told me wryly in Fiji: "If a Fijian Indian tells you that there is no caste in Fiji, you can be sure that he will be of lower caste.") Cow veneration does not have the wide social outreach it has in India itself. Pilgrimage and wandering holy men are hardly in evidence. Temple rituals are, as we have seen, less easy to maintain, but experiencing a revival. Regional variation at one time was more important overseas, because it implied a linguistic basis of division without the overarching presence of a Brahmin superstructure; but in later generations this variation loses vitality because of the decay of the homeland languages. Most of the Hindu diaspora has to transact its communications in English. This already implies a certain sophistication, and the erosion of folk Hinduism. It is a further factor in the importance of the post-British Hindu movements, including some recent phenomena, such as ISKCON, which have a strong presence overseas; in effect, these movements reflect a second main wave of religious developments in overseas Hinduism. Such English-speaking movements have also led to a revival of interest in the practice of yoga. Generally, new revivals emphasize the importance of religious experience and thus of the *yoga-bhakti* polarity, even during a time of reconstruction of ritual Hinduism in an overseas context.

I remarked earlier that, during the Global Period, there is the tendency toward the consolidation of world religions, however dispersed. Thus we have the formation of such institutions as the World Fellowship of Buddhists. This facilitates the evolution of a kind of ecumenical Buddhism, and is in part the consequence of a new feeling of identity, since Buddhism perceives itself as a world religion. This concept is itself important, and I shall return to it below. The diasporas in the Global Period become somewhat more orthodox in tone. We have noted the case of Islam, and the convergence of Black Islam with Sunni orthodoxy. A similar evolution happened with the Bahai in the United States. But the case of Hinduism is itself peculiar: some scholars would deny that there is such a thing as Hinduism at all, or would argue that, even if we can speak of Hinduism, it does not have a single unitary set of beliefs or practices. This thesis of the non-existence or disunity of Hinduism has much to commend it, if we wish to represent realistically "religion on the

ground" in India; it is however no longer correct. For the fact is that Hindus have perforce had to define themselves over against a number of traditional rivals – the Buddhists (here the distinction between *astika* and *nastika* was important); then, more seriously, the Muslims; and, finally, European modes of Christianity. Important here is what may be called "the modern Hindu ideology," pioneered by Vivekananda and developed by Radhakrishnan and others, affirming that Hinduism preaches the unity of religions and the unity in diversity of the Hindu tradition itself. Now, to some extent, this ideology, a powerful ingredient in the Indian nationalist movement, prepared the way for a pluralist state and, at the same time, provided a relatively convincing reply to criticisms launched at Hinduism by missionaries, social reformers and British administrators during the colonial period.

This modern neo-Vedantin kind of exposition of the nature of Hinduism has taken strong root among English-speaking Hindus, and though it neglects the tensions between differing forms of Hinduism on the ground (e.g. between Saivism and Vaishnavism), it serves as an important platform for self-understanding, especially among diaspora Hindus. A more complex model could be espoused – viz. that there are four main movements among Hindus: Saivism, Saktism, Vaishnavism and Smarta Hinduism. The modern Hindu ideology, as I have called it, is largely a Smarta account. The more complex "fourfold" understanding of the Hindu tradition, nevertheless, usually implies mutual toleration and a sense of unity among the branches of the religion, and so in practice comes to approximate the neo-Vedantin version.

From all this it may be observed that the diaspora itself contributes to the process of self-definition an ecumenical spirit and a kind of new orthodoxy. This is especially so in the Hindu case. So we may reply to those who say that there is no such thing as Hinduism: "Maybe over much of its history there was no such clearly demarcated '-ism' as Hinduism; there is now." In a sense Hinduism is a new religion, although its roots are of course very ancient.

The diaspora religions must exist, by their very nature, typically as minority groups (though sometimes, as in Fiji, they may come to constitute a majority). Those that are a "minority at home" have no special difficulties, but there is a question as to how a faith which dominates its home environment, such as Islam with its concept of *dar al-islam* or homeland of the faith, will work out its affairs in the overseas environment. This is in part because the home arrangements give the tradition unfettered opportunity to exercise its law. In a modern bureaucratic State there are further problems, such as regulations about the slaughter of animals and the conflicts between supposedly hygienic arrangements and the demands of traditional law.

As there is a growing consciousness of the Global Period, it becomes apparent to every religion that globally it is, however dominant in a region, a minority. In this sense the diaspora manifestation of a dominant religion can provide experience which will, in due course, become relevant to the global situation.

Another interesting aspect of diaspora religion concerns the degree to which it may expand from an ethnic basis. While a diaspora group may originally have migrated for economic or political reasons, it may eventually acquire some degree of mission, if only at

first osmotically. Thus Tibetan Buddhism, which at first was more concerned to preserve Tibetan traditions abroad – in India, the UK and elsewhere – has become an active presence; so that, like other Buddhist groups and institutions, it is attracting growing interest and converts among Anglos in the English-speaking Western countries. Similarly while much of Hinduism in South Africa is ethnic and disinclined to proselytize, the Ramakrishna Vedanta had a more outward-looking and missionary face. Hinduism there stands in an intermediate position between the more or less non-missionary minority religions, such as the Parsees, Sikhs, Jains and so on, and the more active and traditionally missionary groups such as the Buddhists, the Muslims and the Christians, and smaller groups such as the Bahai. But, as is well known, even Sikhism, which has been largely ethnic in basis, has gained some Anglo converts in the United States. So the distinction between missionary and non-missionary groups may gradually blur and fade away. At any rate, we can see that the impulse to spread and the need to present the teachings in a modern and clearly articulated manner will favor the adaptation, especially the linguistic adaptation, of the diaspora faiths.

There is a factor that the rather conservative minor religions have in practice to bear in mind; that diaspora reinforces contact with major world cultural forces. This factor underlines the need for the faith to express itself in the face of universal religions and secular values. The same problem is faced by a limited ethnic religion (limited, say, to a tribal group) when it comes in contact with universal proselytizing faiths. Each such religion needs to give a universal account of itself, and to articulate its teachings, perhaps under some general principle – e.g., that every group is entitled to its own cultural and religious traditions, and such traditions can, like the universal faiths, point to some aspect of the truth. Admittedly such an argument gets away somewhat from tradition, which needed no defence. This new account of a religion's doctrines is an innovation. Maybe the ethnic group will fuse with others of a similar cultural affiliation, to produce some larger entity: thus it is common these days to talk about "Native American religion," as if there are common values distributed through the varieties of cultures that go to make up, and have gone to make up, the traditional small-scale mosaic which preceded European conquest in North America. Such Native American religion is now held to ally itself with certain universal values of the modern Western milieu, such as environmentalism. The lesson seems to be that you can only deal with the universalist intruder by adopting a universal-type defence. It is thus a natural thing for diaspora religions, even if they have no great missionary pretensions, to evolve universal-type explanations of their teachings and practices. Often they may follow the lead of Western traditions and publish translations and editions of their scriptures, or adopt other external models of operation borrowed on the whole from the West. This degree of adaptation also makes their teachings accessible to the host community. Given that this is a Western style of community, and especially in the United States, attitudes to religion will be in general individualistic and privatized; and so it will not be unusual for religious searchers to hit upon a diaspora religious group and come to belong to it, whether that group is explicitly missionary or not. All this contributes to the cosmopolitan character of religion in major diaspora areas. Yet, at the same time, we have noted the tendency for diasporas in the Global Period to have a

greater sense of self-definition because of increased communication, to and fro, between the homeland and the places of the diaspora.

All this represents the beginnings of blending. Apart from the adaptation of diasporas to host cultures, there are the possibilities, inherent in cultural interfaces, of new forms "betwixt and between," constituting religions in the making. Part of the Hindu diaspora are the migratory gurus, who have pioneered varying forms of religion which absorb elements from both East and West in new syntheses. We may differ as to their value or staying power, but it may well turn out that from among these various Eastern blends there will emerge a strong new religious tradition.

Another factor in the life of diasporas is that members of a transethnic religion will find new ways to work together, for mutual protection and the like. Thus Cambodians, Vietnamese, Sri Lankans, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan and other Buddhists are found in substantial numbers in Southern California, and, through such organizations as the Sangha Council of Southern California, they cooperate in various ways. So it may turn out that the diaspora situation will enhance ecumenism, even apart from the easier communications of the Global Period. There is, as we have seen, the analogous cooperation between Hindus of different languages in the Hindu diaspora, partly due to the decay of the linguistic heritage.

From time to time, I have touched on the phenomenon of the diaspora of subtraditions. Here the classical case I have in mind is where an "alien" subtradition of a dominant religion migrates into the area of that religion. In England, for instance, there are West Indian Christians, various kinds of Eastern Orthodoxy, largely ethnically based, etc. Gradually ecumenical tendencies soften the edges between such a group and the dominant kind or kinds of Christianity. This example leads us to wonder whether in a pluralistic society the diaspora religions themselves may not begin to belong to some kind of pan-religious ecumenism. It would be interesting to analyse the attitudes of believers in such societies. For instance, in Sri Lanka, despite the religious and cultural conflicts between Tamils and Sinhalese in recent times, there appears to be a tendency, especially among the Muslim leadership, to accept a worldview in which different religions have value if pursued with sincerity. This is a worldview which encourages a pluralistic *modus vivendi*. It is an attitude of "Islam within the wider framework of sincere religion." That already is a modification of traditional Islam which, where it is dominant in a society, leaves only a limited place for alternative religions. There are signs in some diaspora societies of the desire for a world religion or world outlook. However, such a new development (finding echoes in neo-Vedanta and Islamic Sufism, etc.) can itself create a particularist backlash among the religions, and this in effect has already happened in Christianity, with works such as Kraemer's *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (1938) and evangelical affirmations of the uniqueness of the Gospel. Liberal interpretations are often faced with conservative countermoves; this, by the way, helps to increase the variety of types of religion.

These, then, are some thoughts about the study of diasporas, an area of research in religion which has been somewhat neglected. Some of the phenomena to which I have drawn attention in this essay have already been looked at by some scholars, including Zwi Werblowsky, to whom this volume is dedicated. It may be time for some worldwide

systematic studies. This may also be a field which implicitly heralds important changes in world religions. We are entering, in the Global Period, a new era, not just of religious researches but of religious life. Not all the traditional religions, nor many scholars, have yet come to terms with these changes.



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III

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE



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Revelation, Reason and Religions

Natural theology is the Sick Man of Europe. In view of the subtle and exhaustive objections adduced by Hume, Kant and modern empiricists against the traditional arguments for God's existence, it is no longer reasonable to rely upon these particular supports for theistic belief. But the alternative is not irrationalism, for this can give us no guidance as to what we should choose: why be Christian rather than Hindu, or religious rather than atheistical? But if we can rely neither on metaphysical reasoning nor on unreasoning, we might feel tempted to write off religion altogether. Yet its truth-suggesting fascination in daily life and the testimony of many profound and holy men is not lightly to be disregarded. It is not my present task, however, to produce the theologian's stone, the long-searched-for argument that will convince the outsider. Rather I wish to consider whether there is a middle way between traditional natural theology and some simple appeal to revelation (or to any other authority). I wish, in effect, to adumbrate the religious reasons for holding doctrines. For I believe on the one hand, with the revelationists, that one cannot excogitate religious truth: one has to judge what is given, in the form of revelations and teachings—since ordinary philosophers and theologians are neither prophets nor Buddhas. But I believe on the other hand, with the rationalistically inclined, that one can still detect considerations favouring one position rather than another.

But first a word about philosophical analysis. I take it that the job of the philosopher here is to elucidate, as far as possible, the

manner in which religious propositions¹ have meaning. This involves connecting up doctrines and experience. Now of course there is no special reason for philosophers to confine themselves to Christian doctrines and life; indeed, to be fair it is necessary to consider other luminous teachings, such as those of Buddhism. Nor can it be pretended that all the great religions are saying the same thing—even if sometimes their doctrines overlap. But in a way this is fortunate, since contrasts help us to see the reasons for them, and in the comparative study of religions one is not merely enabled to view religious teachings (especially one's own) afresh, but one is also offered the chance to gain some further insight into the relation between beliefs and experiences. In brief, if one regards philosophical analysis here as a rather specialized branch of the comparative study of religion, one can acquire a little more clarity about the religious reasons implicit in revelation. But so far, the philosopher is being a neutral in the conflict of faiths. There is no absolute taboo, however, upon his descending into the dusty arena of general apologetic. I propose here to illustrate what can be done in this way in general defence of Christian doctrine. Admittedly, this need not be the job for a philosopher. But on the other hand, the purism of thinking that philosophical analysis is the only proper employment for philosophers is excessive. Intellectual compartmentalization, though often good at the start, may be sterile at the finish.

Thus, one job a philosopher may do is general apologetic. And so the above remarks can be placed in a different context. One way of refurbishing traditional metaphysics is to claim that it expresses, or even evokes, intuitions or disclosures of the divine Being. Now an appeal to such notions must lead in the direction along which I have already pointed. For if the intuition is utterly bare, it can guarantee nothing which can be formulated in words, and is therefore of no use in supporting doctrines. It must at least lead more naturally to one's saying certain things rather than others, and must therefore (albeit in a weak sense) be expressible. On the other hand, it is scarcely realistic to suppose that such an intuition bears a label containing a detailed and legible inscription.

¹ I use the word 'proposition' here as a generic term to cover statements, commands, etc.

If it did, intuitionism would be with difficulty distinguished from, and hardly more plausible than, fundamentalism. It seems, then, to follow that if there are such intuitions, they are dimly suggestive of certain doctrines rather than others; but only *dimly* suggestive. But further, if we appeal to metaphysical intuitions and disclosures we are already indulging in phenomenology; and there seems to be no good reason for confining ourselves to certain intuitions which may or may not arise in certain intellectual (or allegedly intellectual)¹ contexts, but rather ought to contemplate the whole field of religious phenomenology. If, for instance, we are speaking about God, it is reasonable to consider those experiences or disclosures which occur in specifically religious contexts, and which, though considerably ineffable, are dim pointers to certain forms of divine discourse rather than to others.

It might be objected that phenomenology involves merely the description of the psychological content of states of mind, whereas the whole point about an intuition is that it is cognitive, and thus cannot be considered merely as a psychological item. Consequently, it may be argued, an appeal to intuitions does not involve indulging in phenomenology (just as, when we are judging the report of an eyewitness, we are not dragged into a discussion of the psychology of perception). Nevertheless, the contrast seems unrealistic, in the present instance, for a number of reasons. First, to say that an intuition is cognitive is to say that one knows (or claims to know) something in virtue of it; but the same would be true of many numinous experiences (although it must be confessed that more needs to be done to make the notion of 'knowing' in religious contexts perspicuous). Second, intuitions of God only become plausible if they chime in with what is yielded in revelations and disclosures of God (for otherwise why talk of them as 'of God?'); but this already suggests at least some resemblance between revelations and intuitions. Third, even though one can draw a contrast between epistemology and the psychology of perception, the facts pertaining to the latter are by

¹ It may be wondered whether an intuition arising through an argument (such as one of the Five Ways) which can no longer be treated as valid in any straightforward way can properly be described as intellectual; but in any case, it is rather artificial to distinguish between different faculties of the mind.

no means irrelevant to the former. Fourth, where rules of reasoning are not clear (and they are not clear in religion) the distinction between what is to count as cognitive and what counts as merely an item in psychology (or social history, etc.) becomes quite blurred. Fifth, it seems more in accord with common sense to discuss religious truth not merely in the context of supposed intuitions but also in the milieu of those experiences and activities which give religion its living power. I therefore turn to consider specifically religious experiences and disclosures.

For example, the numinous experience analysed by Otto, though hardly definitive in its pronouncements, nevertheless provides the impulse to speak about gods or God. And again, rather differently, mystical experience (by which I mean the interior and imageless visions of the great Western mystics, the *samādhi* attained by the *yogin*, and so on, and which must be distinguished from those experiences mainly discussed by Otto),¹ though various in its flavours and interpretations, does have certain formal characteristics which suggest certain ways of speaking about that which is realized. In the ensuing, I am necessarily crude in my phenomenology, for this kind of task as I have set myself here cannot too well be attempted in so brief a compass.²

There is one further preliminary point before I proceed, namely that a defence of religion by appeal to intuitions or disclosures (the merits of different terms here have to be canvassed) need not entail that *all* people have such experiences. I am inclined to feel that there may be some intimation of divinity which every man may have; but such intimations *may* not occur to all, and in any case may well be of less evidential value than certain profounder revelations to the comparatively few.

Christianity presents an ideologically significant picture of the world which is not derivable from scientific investigations. The elaboration, systematization and general defence of this view of the world can not unreasonably be called an exercise in meta-

¹ For a discussion of Otto's term 'numinous' and the distinct characters of the numinous and the mystical, see my 'Numen, Nirvana and the Definition of Religion' in *Church Quarterly Review*, April-June 1959, pp. 216-25.

² At least, however, I have the excuse of having treated these matters more fully in my *Reasons and Faiths* (London, 1958).

physics. There does not appear to me to be any clear line between theology and speculation: for both are concerned with the kind of cosmos we live in. And at least it makes for explicitness to count Christian metaphysics as not an essay in the exercise of pure reason (which happens to be on the side of the angels), but a defence of a position which cannot be worked out by reason alone. Moreover, this is (in a broad, very broad, sense) an empirical approach, since we consider what is given rather than legislate for reality.

Christianity claims to be monotheistic. Of course, the doctrine of the Trinity seems at first sight to belie this fact, and it is a common accusation by Muslims that the belief in the Incarnation, by identifying God with a visible person, is setting up another God beside God. However, we shall return to this *prima facie* blasphemous and polytheistic character of Christianity in a moment. Meanwhile let us consider the reasons for preferring monotheism to polytheism. People may simply say, of course, that the truth just is that there is one God and that polytheists are heathens. But bad names get us nowhere. Perhaps certain intimations or intuitions tell men that there is something divine which glimmers in the world. But why one divine Being rather than many?

Can we not gain some insight into this matter? Perhaps the following considerations may help. First, monotheism gives us a more exalted view of the divine. But what if the divine is not that much exalted? All we can say here, maybe, is that the more profound and tremendous experiences of the numinous point in this direction. For the notion of discrete divinities, often clashing, hardly matches up to the overwhelming character of certain theophanies. Second, monotheism is simpler, and other things being equal we prefer the simpler hypothesis. Third, polytheism is more attached to local legend and therefore is less adaptable to those living outside the magic circle; and it is hard to believe that the experiences on which beliefs in the gods are based are so various in such distinct detail. Fourth, whether or not primeval religion was monotheistic, early religion is polytheistic, but shows a tendency to evolve towards monotheism or monism. Fifth, monotheism integrates better with moral insights (universal in

nature) than does fragmentary polytheism, especially as the chaotic legends clustering around the gods may be far from edifying. Sixth, the mysterious and overwhelming presence can be linked aesthetically to the cosmological unease, the sense of the awful contingency of the world. Seventh, monotheism, as we shall observe, chimes in, to some degree, with mystical experience.

It will be apparent that these comments on the religions of worship are somewhat aesthetic in character—rather formal explications of considerations which can be employed to back judgement. But if anything is to count as the adducing of reasons in religion, this is, I think, where we have to start.

But what of pantheism or monism? Do not all the above arguments favour such views as much as they do monotheism? And certainly the dividing line between pantheism and monotheism is shadowy. For example, how do we distinguish sharply between a picture of the divine Being concealed *within* all things and that of the divine Being as *beyond* them? It is not a matter simply of whether you have a three- or two-dimensional model (both admittedly not literal)? All, I think, that can be said is that again the monotheistic picture is more intensely numinous. It expresses more strongly and vividly the gulf fixed between worshipper and the object of worship, and thus gives more intense expression to that which is met with in theophany. Again, the astonishment incorporated in the cosmological argument, namely that it is not the case that nothing exists, fits in better with a monotheistic picture than with the pantheistic; for divine fiat links with contingency, whereas emanation hints at necessity.

Yet all these points might well pass the Buddhist by. For in Theravāda Buddhism (not to mention the original teachings of Gautama) there is no doctrine of a divine Creator, no worship of a Supreme Being. Instead there is the interior mystical quest culminating in the attainment of *nirvāna*. Mystical quest, you may say? But is not mysticism a union with God? But that is looking at the matter theistically. And assuredly this is not the Buddhist notion, that there is a union between persons. Nevertheless, there are certain loose resemblances between the mystical goal (even in Buddhism) and the object of worship. These resemblances, while

not necessitating a theistic interpretation, make it in some degree plausible. For in the mystical state, even on an agnostic interpretation, there is a timelessness reminiscent of divine immortality, a transcendence over mundane experience reminiscent of the otherness of the Supreme Being, a bliss which links up with the fascination of the numinous and with the notion of a divine *summum bonum*, a lack of ordinary perceptions which hints at the invisibility of the Creator, a power suggestive of grace—and so on. It is true that the lack of distinction between subject and object in the mystical state leads to doctrines of deification and union with God which may be thought to be blasphemous by the ordinary worshipper. And not unconnectedly, pantheism chimes in with the mystical quest: for if God be within all things, it is not absurd to look within ourselves. Still, though there are such difficulties, certainly mysticism can be suggestively interpreted by the theist as a kind of vision of God (and incidentally is less amenable to a polytheistic interpretation, since the comparatively 'this-wordly' aspect of the gods is less in accord with the imperceptibility and transcendence of the mystical goal, etc.).

Nevertheless, the Theravāda is splendid in its doctrinal simplicity. It eschews metaphysical speculations about Creation and immortality, but concentrates almost exclusively upon inner insight and peace and is not complicated by divine ritual. If we praise monotheism for its simplicity, why not praise this form of Buddhism likewise? Why not indeed? Let us do so. But the later history of Buddhism is instructive. The austere simplicity is replaced in the Mahāyāna by the proliferation of a doctrinally complex faith—one where many of the concepts of theism show themselves: the worship of Avalokiteśvara, doctrines of grace (or the transfer of merit), the Three-Body doctrine (so reminiscent of Christianity), and so on. The intimations of the numinous were perhaps not to be denied. If the Lesser Vehicle, like early Islām in a different way, is glorious in its single-mindedness, it is thereby less rich. The Advaita Vedānta, Śūfism and mystical Christianity, as well as the Mahāyāna, are, though complex in welding together different religious insights, more accommodating. Maybe this will be thought to be no great gain. But we can only judge from the experience of spiritual men; and at least in these teachings there is

a fairly convincing weaving together of diverse strands of religious language and experience. The outer God who is concealed from our gaze by the visible cosmos reappears at the depths of the soul. The unspeakably majestic object of worship is found in the ineffability of interior insight. Where directions are not literal, we may perchance attain the same place by transcending the world outwards and inwards.

Admittedly it is hard to argue against such a doctrine as that of the Advaita, where the picture of God is relegated firmly to second place, and where the Godhead is described somewhat impersonally in accordance, *prima facie*, with the insights of the mystical vision. (Not for nothing was Śaṅkara called a crypto-Buddhist.) Here the picture of the personal Lord is itself implicated in the grand illusion of *māyā*. And one must note that this kind of illusionist idealism is naturally generated by mystical withdrawal. The Christian apologist can appeal merely to three points here. First, the strength and vividness of numinous experience may not warrant the relegation of the personal picture of the Lord to second place. Second, realism about the cosmos fits in better with moral insight; for the promptings of conscience and the sentiments of justice and love fade somewhat where all things are illusory. And third, transcendence of the unreal has less merit than transcendence of the real.¹

So far, then, I have adduced what may be called religious reasons for a monotheism which can, so to speak, accommodate the mystical vision. Thereby two main insights of religion are blended appropriately.

But theism generates a problem. For the exalted view of the divine holiness is reflected in reverse among the devotees. Who can confront this almighty splendour without feeling the converse of holiness? The worshipper so confronted repents in self-debasement. He recognizes not merely holiness in God, but unholiness in himself. The purity of the Godhead reveals the sinfulness of men. And this the more so because in theism morals and religion come together in a most intimate manner, so that religious impurity and moral defect coalesce. Thus the very glory of theism is liable to bring in its train a particular view of man, as

¹ I owe this point to Mr T. S. Gregory, in discussion.

sinful and removed from God's face by a great gulf fixed. How to bridge it?

Men have tried sacrifice, and even a broken spirit. But is it in accord with the supreme blinding majesty of God that puny men should pretend to proffer an adequate expiation, whether by good works or otherwise? The worshipper here must feel that salvation or holiness can only come from the supreme source of holiness. Only God is holy, and so only God can bring holiness. So Allah is said, for all his terror, to be merciful; and here is a deep insight. But is it enough that men should merely live in hope of the divine compassion? Man still feels that it is he that must make expiation for his sins; while on the other hand he supposes that only God can bridge the gulf.

Theism thus brings a religious problem. Yet this is, so to speak, solved by Christianity. For Christ by being both man and God can achieve, through his solidarity with mankind, the expiation for mankind, and, through his Godhood, bridge the gulf. The two requirements are met. Hence too the reaction of the Church against docetism. For though doctrines such as the latter seem to preserve monotheism better they destroy the whole point of Christianity.

But Gāndhi said that the uniqueness of the Incarnation was a great stumbling-block to his acceptance of Christ. Why only one Incarnation? Why the scandal of particularity? First, the Christian doctrine, though it involves a seeming blasphemy, is the simplest of its kind. It is hard, perhaps, for the monotheist to accept what at first sight seems an abrogation of his belief; and it would be blasphemous to do it lightly. Second, multiple incarnations, as in Vaiṣṇavism, seem ill in accord with the majesty of God, especially where animal manifestations are produced through legend. Third, they tend in the direction of docetism, for a person who appears in many forms cannot be thought to *be* one of those forms in the full sense: they are likely to be regarded more as appearances than as realities. Thus the need for atonement will not easily be met by multiple incarnations. Fourth, historical data may be relevant, though I do not propose to examine these directly here.

But history reminds us of a problem. Even supposing that the doctrine of Incarnation strikes a deep chord, how do we recognize

the divine human? What are the grounds, for instance, for calling Jesus God? True, we would only here be being wise after the event; but there are certain suggestive things to which we can point. Miracle-working is an intimation of omnipotence; signs of sinlessness correspond to the purity of the Holy One; the actions of an apparent Saviour chime in with the thought that only God can save; and the claim to divinity supervenes rather startlingly on all these. Not only so but, looking further afield, the pattern of history fits in with the Messianic life.

Moreover, just as monotheism itself harmonizes more easily with the moral insights of men than does polytheism, so the Incarnation has a moral significance but dimly adumbrated in pure monotheism of the Jewish or Muslim variety: for Christ in making himself a sacrifice not merely fulfils, as it were, a profound religious function, but illuminates the field of morality by his example. The Suffering Servant helps us to understand the significance of love blended with humility. This is not to deny that elsewhere there are similar conceptions, as in Buddhist compassion; but it may well be claimed that in Christianity there is a striking tragic realism which weaves together the insights of numinous religion, mysticism and morality.

Perhaps all this balancing of insights is precarious and indeed flavoured with subjective preferences. I concede that the basic points, namely the superior richness of Christianity, the emphasis on theism and the religion of worship, the need for atonement and the attractiveness of *agapē*, constitute no knockdown arguments. And there are certainly counter-arguments, such as the imperilling of pure monotheism in Christianity and, perhaps, its Judaic dogmatism whereby little credit is given to the intuitions of the polytheist. Nevertheless, a sympathetic Buddhist or Hindu would, I suggest, regard the arguments as at least relevant. Maybe one can gain no more certainty in such matters than in, say, literary or artistic criticism. But one would not for this reason deny that there are relevant insights (or reasons) in regard to revelations. In any event, it is incumbent upon us to try to give such reasons, for they make explicit our religious value-judgements. The trouble about a great deal of comparative apologetic is that it is not thus explicit.

So much, albeit briefly, for what I mean by religious reasons. There are, however, other tasks for the apologist. Revelations, for various reasons, give different pictures of this world. And some of these apply more easily than others. Or at any rate there are problems about their application which must concern us. I use the term 'application' here for the following reason. On the view here presented, certain revelations or revelatory experiences are basically what are appealed to in defence of a religious position. I do not myself believe that one can gain a knowledge of God simply by observing the physical world. Nevertheless the doctrines themselves present a picture of the cosmos which has to square with reality. That is, we do not see that a daffodil is divine (save perhaps in peculiar contemplations) and thus come to believe in God. But our belief gives us the notion that the daffodil has a divine flavour. (A like remark applies to morality too.) Regarding problems of application, the purposive view of history, for example, implicit in Christianity can be contrasted with the cyclical and repetitive picture provided in Indian religion. More importantly, cosmology poses difficulties of application.

We find that there are billions of stars in countless galaxies. Some of these stars are suns; and some of these will perhaps have planets like ours. The theory of evolution and the possibility of the synthesis of organic from inorganic matter may suggest that it is not incredible (and perhaps even probable) that there is life elsewhere in the universe and that there are in other places reasoning organisms. Such speculations would create acute difficulties about the scandal of particularity: the scandal might indeed seem an outrage. Hinduism and Buddhism, with their florid imaginings of beings of all sorts in all kinds of worlds, find the task of applying themselves to this vast universe less difficult. For the Trinity Doctrine, as a final expression of truth about the Godhead, may suffer if there are men elsewhere to be saved through Incarnation. Agreed, all this is highly speculative, but it is a matter for the philosopher, *qua* metaphysical apologist, to discuss.

Again, there are certain more traditional metaphysical problems concerned with the application of doctrines to the world which ought to be discussed. Notably, there is the problem of free will,

which links up with the truth or otherwise of scientific materialism. More precisely, it connects not only with the conceptual problem of whether one could adapt language in such a way as to remove the dualistic ontology which seems implicit in current usage, but also with informed speculation as to the possibility of a unified scientific theory of human behaviour. To this latter recent advances in cybernetics, brain physiology and so forth are obviously relevant.

What then is the situation? First, there is philosophical analysis, which helps to illuminate the structure and epistemology of doctrines, East and West. As such it is best regarded as a peculiar way of doing the comparative study of religions. Then there is general apologetics, the giving (in the present instance) of religious reasons for a certain view of the cosmos; and this might as well be done by the sympathetic philosopher as by anyone else. Here historical facts may enter in, but these already have to be interpreted by reference to certain religious insights. Then there arise questions of a general nature, which though not pure exercises in the *a priori* nevertheless ought to engage philosophers' attention, regarding the application of doctrines to the cosmos as we know it. And all this, save neutral philosophical analysis, can be termed 'metaphysics'. Or it is a sort of natural theology—it is natural, since it does not merely expound revelation but attempts to give reasons on behalf of a revelation; and it is theology because it involves religious beliefs and ways of speaking. But perhaps I am here being a Pickwick, for this is not natural theology in the old sense. It is a soft, rather than the old hard, variety.

Yet what of the glimmering abstractions of yesteryear? What of the Five Ways and the superb claims of reason? Here, I can only feel that the hard metaphysics of the old days, where Aristotle and others conspire with faith, has to be left on one side. It is true that there are uneasinesses about the cosmos which the traditional arguments for God's existence enshrine—in particular the cosmological worry of why anything exists at all. But the rules of argument in this connexion are so debatable that it is absurd to pretend that we have either strong inductions or deductions here. In short, traditional natural theology can supply

hunches which perhaps reinforce the insights of religious phenomenology, but it cannot stand on its own.¹

The main point of this paper may be put in another way by saying that any appeal to religious experience (whether intuitive or otherwise) must inevitably lead to a consideration of the experience not merely of Christians but of Buddhists and others, and thereby to an examination of the way experience is linked to different sorts of doctrines. Through this investigation one is bound to ask what the criteria are for choosing between different formulations of religious belief. And from the apologetic point of view it is necessary to give reasons for accepting one's own faith rather than some other. Since natural theology in the old form appears to me to be gravely suspect, and since an irrationalist appeal to revelation alone (whether fundamentalist or not) is utterly self-defeating, our only choice is to work with the notion of religious reasons of the kind which I have sketched.

All this may seem somewhat programmatic. But even programmes are sometimes useful, and I have tried to illustrate part of the programme of Christian metaphysics. I said at the outset that natural theology is the Sick Man of Europe. I do not profess to have cured him. But at least I have tried to give advice on how to live with one's coronary.

¹ This same point about the traditional proofs is made with a rather different emphasis in Ch. X, pp. 172-3.—Ed.

The Relation Between Christianity and the Other Great Religions

SYNOPSIS

I. Christians single out the Bible rather than, say, the *Bhagavadgītā* as authoritative. But why? We cannot any longer be isolationist, ignoring the claims of Eastern religions. It is true that some modern theology encourages us to be culturally parochial, despite contemporary revolts against dogmatism. The modern predicament poses the problem of the tests of truth in religion as between one faith and another. Its solution requires that we should gain as unbiased a knowledge of other faiths as is possible.

II. Consider the two great presuppositions of belief in Christ's divinity, namely belief in a personal God and in the importance of history. Regarding the first, Theravada Buddhism is challenging, since it is agnostic. Further, an influential form of Hinduism places the Absolute above the idea of a personal Creator. As to the second presupposition, the Judaeo-Christian view of history fits in with the doctrine of personal creation, and is suggested by Evolutionary Theory. Rejecting rebirth, moreover, weakens the cyclical view found in Hinduism and Buddhism. But such reasons in support of the presuppositions are 'soft' rather than 'hard' and clear-cut.

III. Now we can discuss Christ. The logic of theism, *via* the notion of sin and the need for expiation and sacrifice, moves in the direction of belief in the Incarnation and away from Hindu ideas of multiple incarnations. But it is not in place here to discuss actual historical evidences, partly because historical investigation *by itself*, that is, without presuppositions, does not yield hard facts about the nature and career of Christ.

These remarks indicate that other faiths contain truth and that Christian theology needs translating as far as possible into existing Eastern concepts.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE OTHER GREAT RELIGIONS

I

WHEN THEOLOGIANS and preachers tell a man to hold fast to revelation, he may become distracted. Which way is he to turn? To the *Upanishads*, to the *Lotus of the Good Law*? No, these were not the books his mentors had in mind. Besides, revelation does not equal Scriptures. The Scriptures describe encounters between the Beyond and men, and it is such encounters that revelation essentially consists in. So when we are told to hold fast to revelation, we are being asked to meditate upon and to respond to the living experiences which faith can bring. But what experiences? The sudden enlightenment of Zen, the theophany vouchsafed to Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā*? A Christian theologian will not be thinking of these events. For one thing, the encounters (he will say) occur in and through history. But what history? That of the Aryans sweeping into the Indus valley and thereby causing that great mingling and jumbling of cultures and insights which we call Hinduism? That of the Muslims exploding into Asia and Europe? That of the distant Chinese? Christian theologians will scarcely be talking about such histories: they will be thinking of the Jews, of the Apostle Paul, of Constantine—and thereafter they will be thinking from within the parochial context of European history.

Part of the reason for this apparently narrow outlook is the fault of our schools and universities. But part is due to the way history has run. For many centuries the world was thought to consist roughly in the Roman Empire plus the so-called barbarians surrounding it; and Europe and part of the Middle East constituted a separate unit more or less cut off from the wider world. Even when that wider world was opened up, the isolationism of Europeans continued to express itself in a depreciation of the cultural and other

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achievements of the great Eastern civilizations, and a people nurtured on Christian orthodoxy failed to see much virtue in the religions which prevailed in distant lands.

But now things are changed, and our cultural isolationism is steadily crumbling. For now, through the devoted work of translators and commentators, and through the personal experience of those who have come into contact with other faiths, we have a far better understanding of their central teachings than our Victorian fathers ever had. But understanding may bring doubts about Christianity, for the simple reason that if we are asked to accept a revelation, it is much easier if it has no worthy rivals.

It is therefore singularly unfortunate that the type of theology that has made the greatest impact in the West outside the Roman Catholic Church in recent years is essentially isolationist. Barth's theology, of course, enshrines a great idea. Its very strength makes it retain a grip upon our thinking. At one stroke it removed our intellectual worries about the alleged unreasonableness of Christianity in a modern age and rationalized our biblical studies. Since metaphysics is useless or dangerous (for man's reason too is fallen), the attack upon it by modern philosophers could be received with equanimity. There has thus been a holy conspiracy between theology and A. J. Ayer. Where there can be no metaphysical conclusions, there can be no metaphysical doubts, and the man of intellect can keep his reason for more mundane tasks. Again, the slow undermining of fundamentalism left many in doubt, especially in the Protestant fold. For what kind of authority could the Bible possess if it were not to be taken pretty literally? And yet literally it is sometimes wrong. The new view of revelation as something which does not consist in so many propositions uttered somehow by God, but as God's self-disclosure, cut at the root of these doubts. For such reasons the new theology is refreshing. But it nevertheless is parochial and isolationist.

And why? Simply because, in its repudiation of reasons, it

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presents its apologia for Christianity through a false dichotomy. It says: 'Faith comes from God: turn to revelation', as though the only live option were the choice between agnosticism and Christ. But in turning from agnosticism to faith there are many directions in which one can go.

Those who have been brought up in the small world of Europe will perhaps see only these two alternatives. But there are other living faiths apart from Christianity. And among thinking people who have some acquaintance with these other spiritual systems, there is an increasing trend towards the East. Zen, for instance, while much misunderstood among beatniks, has a powerful attraction for those who cannot bring themselves intellectually to a belief in God in the Christian sense. Vedanta too has its magnetism. It would be salutary for most Christians to read, in a dispassionate way, *What Vedanta Means to Me*,¹ in which sixteen people (mostly intelligent) give their reasons for embracing this Eastern faith. Some of them find the dogmatism of Christianity distasteful, and so echo the reaction of many Orientals. They can hardly be comforted if theology remains parochial and isolationist.

Let us transport ourselves in our imaginations to some Eastern country. Somewhere distantly to the north-west there is a little place called Palestine, and further off is Europe, glittering with automobiles. Here, in our Eastern spot, we are being asked to think of history in terms of Israel and Europe, to listen to St Augustine on the City of God trying to impose a pattern on that history. But where can the Buddha fall into that pattern? What are we to say of Asoka, the Constantine of Buddhism? Confucius and Lao-Tze: are these to be ignored? Though being chosen as a people is scarcely to be regarded as a privilege, the scandal of particularity is seen with redoubled force in Madura and Saigon.

If, then, we abandon biblical fundamentalism and interpret revelation in terms of encounters, we cannot simply ignore the

¹ Ed. John Yale (1961).

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encounters which have been enshrined in the best traditions of the non-Christian religions. Yet this approach seems to leave us in a predicament. If we are so catholic in our range of appreciation, how can we know what is true and what is not? If the Buddha based his teachings upon personal experience, how can we say that they are wrong? How can we presume to judge so intimate a matter? And why should the Christian set up his own teaching as somehow superior? Superiority seems both unjustifiable and distasteful.

Our reaction to this predicament can easily take the following form. We can become hyper-protestants, and not Christian ones at that. People read the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Buddhist scriptures and they think:

These writings have something good to say; and yet religions are quarrelsome, and enshrine their quarrels in external differences. Perhaps the great teachers of the past have been misunderstood, and their teachings corrupted by fierce monks and Brahmins and churches. There must be an underlying, even esoteric, truth concealed beneath the externals—externals which form a screen between man and the Transcendent. This inner truth is the Perennial Philosophy, the true heart of all good religion; and the various ‘religions’ represent so many obstacles to the unity and liberation of mankind. Yet, if rightly understood, the various ‘religions’ may be used as so many paths to the Transcendent. They are all false, and they are all true.

This is the ultimate in religious protestantism, but it has lost any specifically Christian flavour.

It forms part of the attraction of intellectual Hinduism, of the attempts to produce the grand synthesis which will bring together and justify all faiths. The appeal to experience and encounter may issue, then, in this tolerant doctrine. Despair about the criteria of truth leads to an acceptance of all claims. The fundamental unity of all religions is the answer, the way out of our predicament. Or so it seems.

The hyper-protestantism which I have described may rest partly on the assumption that there cannot be tests of truth in religion, as between one faith and another. But though it is hard and invidious and disturbing to seek for such tests, the attempt should be made,

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before we come to such tolerant conclusions. But we shall probably find that any tests that there are do not operate with obvious clarity, that they are fuzzy and hard to apply, that there is no clear-cut way of saying 'This is true and that is false'. In this sense, dogmatism must perish. And this may be disturbing.

But the new world in which we are living, the East-West world, is bound to be disturbing. And further, religion is in some measure a mystery. Those who expect clear-cut tests of truth are looking at the Transcendent as though it is only a little higher than the angels. Maybe it is rather saddening for the divine consciousness to note the arrogance of those who take everything literally, who 'know' all the secrets of the heavenly realm, who presume to lay down precise rules for interpreting the structure of sacred reality.

It might further be objected that the idea of seeking the tests of truth among the great religions is un-Christian, since God judges us and not we him. Christ is the canon of truth, and the other religions must be judged in that light. Yet this objection sounds like a re-emergence of that dogmatism and isolationism which I have already attacked. But in any case if we want to follow Christ we must make him intelligible to those brought up in other faiths, and this already means talking their language to some degree. But to talk their language is in part to appeal to tests of truth which they themselves will at least recognize as relevant. We cannot, even as missionaries, escape from the modern predicament.

It may also be complained that this lays an intolerable burden upon us. Rightly to tackle the problem we have to know a lot about Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and so forth. But Christian theology is complex enough already and the source of a flood of books (many of them, alas, in German). Is it not unbearable that we have to swell our reading-lists so, to widen our circle of acquaintance so and to expand so the time we need for reflection? This complaint is partly just; but we must recall the good authority we have for regarding the division of labour as a pattern for church organization.

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Not everyone, obviously, can have the time and inclination to investigate these matters in detail. But all thinking Christians should realize the importance and general nature of the problem.

There is a last objection which I need to consider. Isn't our interpretation of other faiths bound to be coloured by Christianity? So how can we ever hope to give a fair appraisal of these religions from their own point of view? And if we cannot be genuinely fair, the exercise of trying to find tests of truth which could at least be accepted as being relevant to other faiths is pointless and uncandid. Maybe so. But though bias may not be completely eliminable, there are degrees. We must endeavour as far as possible to be warmly dispassionate.

Not long since a delightful lady missionary was driving me to a hospital not far from Banaras. We passed a shrine, and she remarked: 'I'm always very sad to see the piety with which these Hindus worship at that shrine.' I asked why. 'Well,' she said, with a sort of simple finality, 'there's no one there to hear them.' I was startled, for I wouldn't have thought about it in that way. A lot of other people would not either.

II

The investigation of the tests of truth can conveniently start from the problem of the historical nature of Christianity. We are inclined to think as follows: 'Whereas other religions have, no doubt, some insight into the Transcendent, Christianity is uniquely rooted in history. The Buddha was no doubt a supremely wise and holy man; but Christ *did* certain things, in a concrete historical situation. History, thereby, demonstrates the truth of Christianity, in a way in which it does not in regard to other faiths.'

But first, the Christian account of the events of Christ's life is not simply dictated by the evidence which we have. Far from it; for the strange nature of the events means that the historian's conclusions will depend to a considerable extent upon his presuppositions. These

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include belief in a personal God and a view about the importance of history. But these beliefs are absent from some important non-Christian traditions. Given the beliefs, the events of the Bible may fall into place. But without them, they hardly have the great significance claimed for them. In short, historical investigation by itself scarcely shows that Christianity is true.

Second, the events of the New Testament, even if they were established beyond any shadow of doubt (which they are not), are not quite commensurate with the cosmic conclusions that are based upon them. Christ's rising from the dead does not entail his divinity as defined in the Creeds. So the sympathetic Hindu may feel: 'This truly was a great man, of vast spiritual power; but he is best regarded as one among the great teachers of the world, not as *uniquely* manifesting the Transcendent.'

Of the two great presuppositions of Christian history, the more important, clearly, is belief in a personal God. But it is precisely at this point that Hindu and Buddhist objections are most likely to be raised. This fact is sufficiently startling to justify my saying a lot about it. For how often do we read (especially in old-fashioned books) that some kind of belief in God is to be found in all cultures? And haven't we comforted ourselves in days of doubt by the thought that the great majority of men have believed, in some sense, in God? Can this almost universal testimony be utterly without foundation? Such is the way we have been brought up to think.

But wrongly. For one great wing of Buddhism, the Theravada—that form of belief which prevails in Ceylon, Burma and South-east Asia—is agnostic about a personal Creator. Not only, according to the Pali scriptures, was the Buddha deeply troubled by the problem of evil, so that a good God became incredible to him; but further he looked on certain questions as meaningless and incapable of a proper answer: a metaphysics of the Transcendent is impossible, on his view. This tradition, seeing its central truth in nirvana, the abode of peace beyond the round of rebirth, and not in God or the Absol-

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lute, has flourished for some two and a half thousand years. It constitutes a living stream of religious experience. So we cannot shrug it off as an unimportant deviation into absurdity. Nor can we castigate it as an element in the lunatic fringe which almost invariably surrounds religion. Nor can we dismiss it (as some may be inclined to do) by saying that it is a philosophy, not a religion. For it is obviously not a philosophy in the way (say) logical empiricism is, though it may include such a philosophy. Buddhism merits being called a religion not merely because ordinary folk in the Theravadin countries tend to worship the gods and even (mistaking the doctrine) the Buddha; but far more importantly because the centre of the faith, nirvana, is something ultimately given in the experience of peace and insight, and because this experience merits comparison with that of the great contemplatives of other traditions. Only here, the experience is stripped of all but the minimal interpretation. There is no question here, among such Buddhists, of its being interpreted as union with a personal God, nor even as a merging into the Absolute, as some Hindu teachers would say. All that we have is the teaching that in some sense nirvana is a transcendent state.

It cannot therefore be said that there is any explicit belief, in Theravada Buddhism, in a personal God. Nor again can it justly be said that there is such an implicit belief—not, at least, if we look at the matter from the Theravadin point of view, for nobody within that tradition would accept that nirvana *really is* an experience of God. Christians might perhaps feel that in his own way the Buddhist saint does have some kind of vision of God. But this is not a view which can be derived from the Theravadin tradition itself. And nothing is more nauseating than that kind of apologetic which presumes to tell the other fellow what he 'really means', however strenuously he may deny it. Unfortunately, it is a theological ploy often used. It is like a Tory telling a Socialist that he really means by Welfare State a system of capitalist enterprise.

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One main stream of Hindu thought and religion, moreover, while not denying belief in a personal God, relegates it firmly to second place. The highest truth is that there is one Ultimate Reality, and the world as we know it is illusory, an enchanting show which we mistake for the ultimate Reality. The religious quest is summed up in the words of the Upanishad 'Lead me from the unreal to the real'. There are, then, two levels of truth: truth about the Absolute and truths about the world, which have only a provisional and secondary significance. Belief in a personal Creator belongs to the second level, for the Creator of an illusory world shares in its illusoriness. Thus within religion itself there are two levels of truth; and the lower truth concerns a personal God who is the object of worship, adoration and prayer.

Therefore, many Hindus, and many Westerners who have embraced Vedanta, consider the Christian belief in God acceptable but secondary, true but not in the highest way, spiritual, but a sign of incomplete spiritual development. Again, it is through contemplation, which brings identification with the Absolute, that the highest truth is realized. In this the Theravada and Vedanta are at one.

But how could anyone know which of these religious systems—Christianity, Buddhism, Vedanta—is true? What tests would we apply? But before we can answer these questions it is necessary to be clear about their inner relation to religious experience. The interpretation of the great religions from this point of view which I would offer is, briefly, as follows.¹

Theravada Buddhism is essentially a mystical religion. That is to say, it concentrates upon the contemplative experience which constitutes the assurance of nirvana. It eschews other complications. It refuses to commit itself to an interpretation of the Transcendent in personal terms. Thereby it repudiates devotion and worship as these are understood in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The great

¹ This interpretation I have attempted to justify in detail in *Reasons and Faiths* (1958) and more informally in *A Dialogue of Religions* (1960).

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numinous experiences of the Prophets which had such an explosive impact upon the Jews have no place or significance in the Theravadin tradition. And without genuine worship and without the experience of the numinous as a central element the Theravada has no special reason to sacrifice its essential simplicity for the complications and difficulties of a doctrine of God. In short, it centres on mysticism, but mysticism without God.

This analysis implies that we can distinguish fairly clearly between two main kinds of religious experience—the prophetic and the mystical. The religion of the holy is associated above all with the former type of experience, while mysticism may or may not be linked to such a religion of worship. I think that anyone who considers the experiences of the Prophets (not to mention Muhammad) and St Paul on the one hand, and those of Eckhart, St Teresa, the Buddha and the Sufis on the other, will recognize a difference in atmosphere which is sufficient to place them in different categories.

Thus the Hindu doctrine which I outlined can be characterized as reflecting both these strands of experience, but in such a way that the contemplative intuition of the Absolute is given overwhelming priority over the experience of the personal, holy Being.

Thus, from the Christian point of view, both Buddhism and this form of Hinduism involve an under-valuing of the experience of the personal Lord in favour of the more impersonal bliss and peace of contemplation. Once the problem is stated in this way, the main question about the truth of the rival systems becomes this: 'Which form of priority is correct?' Given that there are these two strands of experience, should we prefer those doctrines which place the Personal at the centre of the Transcendent and which interpret contemplation in terms thereof, or should we prefer those which do the opposite, by regarding the Personal as rather unimportant?

It would of course be wrong to think that because preference has been mentioned, the question of truth boils down to a matter of taste. It never does. But once we look at world religions from this

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somewhat Olympian standpoint, it is obvious that there is no clear-cut way of proving one to be right and the others (comparatively) wrong. Rather, the reasons which back our judgments about these things have the softness and lack of decisiveness which characterize the arguments and evidences which are used, say, in literary criticism. Perhaps some may think that this is a desperately unfortunate state of affairs. Surely there should be clear evidences for religious truth? What kind of faith is it that relies upon such 'aesthetic' judgments? But the answer to such complaints is (as I suggested before) simply that the Transcendent is no easy matter. Who really can expect the truth about it to be as plain as the truth about orchids and moons?

If we take the Personal seriously, then the following argument, based upon an appraisal of the history of religions, is relevant. Whereas, if we assign the priorities in the way in which the above form of Hinduism does, then the religion of devotion and worship becomes increasingly meaningless. The Personal is swallowed up in the impersonal Absolute. The religion of worship is at heart illusory. And we can point to an ironic state of affairs in Buddhism. For while the Theravada probably does represent, as it claims to do, the original teaching of the Buddha, the Mahayana reintroduced the numinous and the Personal in its richer, more proliferated forms of teaching. Here we find nirvana is in effect erected into the Absolute and that this Absolute is identified with the Buddha in his *dharma-kāya* or Truth-Body, that the historical Buddha—together with other Buddhas—is a manifestation of the Absolute, and that by calling on the name of the Buddha the faithful may obtain merit and salvation. There are reflexions here of the Incarnation, of belief in a personal God, of grace and even (since the Buddha showers merit on others out of his immeasurable store gained through his infinite sacrifices on behalf of mankind) of Christ's redeeming sacrifice. Buddhism thus develops beyond the rather austere form of belief represented by the Theravada into a richer and more mythological

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form in which certain elements of theism are to be found. Such a fact can, of course, be evaluated in differing ways. But it may help to show that the most profound combination of the numinous and the mystical is to be discovered in orthodox theism. For here the inner vision found in nirvana and elsewhere can be seen as union with God, the object of worship, and this way of looking at it does not derogate from the peace and insight attained by the contemplative. On the other hand, the erection of contemplation into the summit of religion tends to destroy the Personal. And because the latter is regarded in such systems as unimportant, it happens too that polytheism in practice is tolerated. It is where the Holy is taken seriously that the gods are banished as unworthy representations of the Transcendent.

If this argument were rejected by adherents of these other faiths, it would be because the religion of worship and the concept of the holy and personal Creator were not taken seriously. How then can we vindicate the experience of the numinous in itself? If the Theravadin refuses to see in the Prophets and others like them the genuine stamp of knowledge of the Transcendent, how can we argue with him? It is hard to say—for we too must recognize the marvellous simplicity and serenity of the Theravada. Yet the prophetic and numinous experience is undoubtedly a form of religious encounter: and it is perhaps paradoxical for the Buddhist to appeal centrally to spiritual experience and yet to ignore or reject one great segment of such experience.

In brief, then, one test of truth which I propose is this—that a system of revealed truth or doctrine should reflect the experience of great men in particular and of all religious men in a general way. The emphasis on ‘great men’ may seem undemocratic. But it seems absurd to treat the lives of ordinary folk as on a par, in this context, with those of St John of the Cross, the Buddha and so on.

In the confrontation, then, of the theistic religions with those non-theistic systems which I have described, the claim of theism to represent the fullest truth initially lies in its capacity to weld together the insights both of the prophet and of the contemplative. To say

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this is not simply to appeal in a parochial way to revelation. And it implies that certain narrow views of theism, which neglect the contemplative strand in religion and Christianity, would destroy the basis of this claim. It may be noted that even Islam, which initially stemmed from the overwhelming prophetic experience of Muhammad, became enriched (and perhaps altered) through the Sufi movement.

I have spoken here almost exclusively in terms of religious experience and have said nothing about morality. It is sometimes tempting for Christians, and indeed others, to claim that the ethical teachings of their faith and the practical fruits of the spread of that faith are sufficient guarantee of its truth. But the heart of religion does not lie in doing good, though religion ought to *include* doing good. Further, it is very difficult to evaluate, statistically or otherwise, the effects of Christianity as compared, say, with the effects of Buddhism. Still, religions do inculcate certain attitudes towards the world; and they should be such that they harmonize with the demands of moral action. So as a corollary to what I have said about theism welding together the insights of the prophet and the contemplative, let me add that theism, by its emphasis on the transcendence of God, leaves room for the independence and reality of the world and thereby provides an attitude towards it which stimulates moral action as an independent and real part of the religious life.

So much, then, for the first great presupposition of Christian history. But what about the idea of history as a developing process in which God progressively reveals himself? This second presupposition seems in marked contrast to much traditional Oriental thought, where the cosmos has been thought vast and infinitely long in time—a way of thinking which squares well with modern cosmology: the Buddhist does not have to demythologize as much as we do, for we have had to jettison the mythological cosmology of the Old Testament.

It would take much space to write about this topic adequately, especially because in our view of history metaphysical and empirical

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elements are entangled together. Let me just sketch the outline of a possible answer. First, if theism be true, it brings with it a belief in creation. The doctrine that God creates (so to speak) through an act of will symbolizes well the radical transcendence of God and the dependence of the cosmos upon him. The alternative picture of emanation or of the Absolute transforming itself into the cosmos, which we find in some Hindu theologies, suggests that in some sense the creation is *necessary* and not contingent. Now an act of will is figured as being in time. The creation becomes a piece of analogical history, though not literal history, for it precedes all history. This way of describing the matter fits in with the notion that God acts too in human history. Second, the Eastern view of the cyclical nature of history is partly dependent on belief in rebirth. On empirical grounds we may well doubt whether this belief is true. Third, the way in which human history has recently been running has led, in Eastern countries, to a revaluation of the significance of time: for the drive towards political and economic freedom has introduced a secular version of 'realized eschatology'. Fourth, Evolutionary Theory, with its undertones of 'nature into history', reinforces a sense of direction (though not necessarily *progress*, that sadly battered Victorian concept).

If we were to give such reasons for the two great presuppositions of Christian history, we might well find that the adherents of other faiths will remain unmoved. But this does not imply that the arguments are not relevant. It must be remembered that rarely do religious reasonings persuade individuals to change their faith. But this does not mean that they are useless. For without reasons and evidences there cannot be such a thing as truth; and without truth there can be no belief. Moreover, we find that, as in aesthetics and in philosophy, reasonings have a long-term effect. What occurs is a kind of social dialogue. In the course of time certain views seem to gather persuasiveness while others fade into implausibility. Reasonings are by no means irrelevant to this process.

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III

I have said little or nothing about Christ. This might seem a grave and indeed fatal omission in any discussion of the confrontation between Christianity and other faiths. But I have tried to show that it is not possible to plunge straight into the New Testament as though it is intelligible or acceptable to anyone, whatever his cultural background. This is one further instance of the idiocy of selling Bibles without commentaries and of identifying the Word with what you can buy for a few shillings. Before the Buddhist or the Hindu can come to grips with the Gospels he must be given an insight into the nature of Christian presuppositions about God and history. It was therefore necessary to say a good deal about them before considering the figure of Christ himself.

But it is unnecessary here to examine particular historical problems arising from a study of the texts. What I want briefly to sketch is rather the way in which (after the event) we can begin to see how the logic of theism inclines in the direction of an Incarnation. This is important both for the way in which the Christian may confront the uncompromising monotheism of Islam, which finds the Incarnation frankly blasphemous, and for the way in which he may confront the multiplicity of incarnations which the Hindu believes in.

The notion of a Holy Being carries with it a converse, namely, that the worshipper of such a Being cannot but feel himself to be a sinner, by contrast. It is a defect of much preaching about sin in the proper religious sense that it tends to concentrate upon the wickednesses of mankind, as though this harping on evil will bring men to a realization of the truth of religion. Far from it! Without the belief in a Holy One, sin is nonsense. Whom do I sin against if I am an atheist? And how can I think myself unclean if it is not by meditating on the glory and goodness of God? Remove the holiness of God, and all we can speak about is moral badness, not sin in the proper sense. First God, then sin: not vice versa. It is therefore

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part of the logic of theism, with its emphasis on the numinous experience of God's majesty, that men should regard themselves as sinful. In a developed form of theism, this sinfulness is of course not merely ritual uncleanness, but is intimately connected with moral faults. And there is, empirically, good evidence of such faults among the great mass of human beings. Hence men must feel responsible for their sin, even though there is something necessary about it.

But holiness can only come from holiness. Only the Holy One can remove sin, give grace, confer wholeness upon the creature. This leaves men in a predicament. On the one hand, before God men feel responsible for their sins and called upon to expiate them. Yet on the other hand, they know in their heart of hearts that only God can save. How marvellous it would be if the paradox could be resolved through God's becoming man! He could thus both expiate and save. But to do this he must truly be man: only a compatriot can be a hostage on my behalf. At one stroke we can see that the logic of theism moves gently towards the Incarnation and that it moves gently away from belief in many avatars, with their implicit docetism.

None of this argument has anything directly to do with historical facts. Whether such an Incarnation has happened in actual fact is a question which must be decided by reference to the historical evidence. So must the question whether there is any factual warrant for the belief in many avatars among the Hindus and in many Buddhas among the Buddhists. But we know how to set about answering these questions. I hope merely to have shown certain general ways of thinking about Christianity in the context of the great religions. Such thoughts are not mere appeals to revealed truth. To repeat: there are many supposed revelations, so that we cannot dogmatize *simply* on the basis of any one of them. This is not to say that revelation should be disregarded. We do not pretend to be prophets or sages who originate bodies of revealed truth or who communicate their encounters with God. But we do need to know how to evaluate the deliverances that are given to us.

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Journeying into foreign lands and alien cultures can bring one to a better understanding of one's own faith. One can see certain general features of good religion which can be used as a yardstick for measuring the inessential accretions of one's own faith. And just as studying Tolstoy may throw indirect light upon Turgenev, Mozart upon Brahms, Goya upon Picasso (for widening our experience in a certain category helps us to understand better what we already know), so the gentle wonders of Buddhism and the subtle theologies of Hinduism, the poetry of the Tao and the single-mindedness of Islam, will shed some illumination upon the heart of Christianity. The early Church found good in Plato and used the 'pagans' in its own way: likewise now perhaps the Church can see the glories of other faiths and use them for its own glory.

It follows that we must increasingly ponder the problem of translating Christian theology. Not of course literally, for that's been done often enough, but more in the way in which St Augustine and Aquinas translated Christian thoughts into the terminology of the Greek philosophers. For Christianity to be really intelligible to those brought up in other cultures, the concepts of the non-Christian religions must be adapted for the purpose.

I have tried to sketch out the answers to one or two vital problems in this area. But I would be distressed if anyone, upon reading this essay, should think: 'Isn't it nice that we have a fellow here who knows a bit about Buddhism and all that and who has dealt with these Orientals? He has shown how Christianity can answer these other religions, so I don't need to worry further about it. What would the Church come to if she couldn't rely upon a few hired eggheads to keep atheists, Hindus, Marxists and all enemies at bay?' Of course, I could interpret such thoughts as a compliment to me. Would they not imply that my 'answers' were rather convincing? But are they? People ought to ponder and to be worried by these things. Reading the Buddhist scriptures may sometimes be a cure for anti-religious feelings, but it doesn't always conduce to Christian orthodoxy.

CHAPTER 22

God's Body

Recently Anthony Kenny wrote as follows:

The world was not thought of [by the Christian tradition] as the expression of God's mind in the way that our words and actions are the expression of our thoughts. To think in that way would be to make the world God's body, which traditional theology would have regarded as objectionably pantheistic.¹

He may be right, for by "traditional theology" he means Western theology. In the Indian tradition, however, Rāmānuja (eleventh century) made the analogy between the God-world relationship and the soul-body relationship. There are many merits to this idea, and I wish here to explore them further.²

But first: why is there this horror of pantheism in traditional Western theology? And what is pantheism? The horror stems from the thought that there must be a gulf between God and creatures, and this in turn is because in the theistic traditions God is the sole object of worship, from whom all power and holiness flow. Merging with God is not possible for a worshiper, and pantheism—if it means somehow an identity between nature and God and between humans and God—has the flavor of blasphemy. Although the Rāmānuja doctrine may seem at first glance like blasphemy, it was an expression of a theism of grace, which Rāmānuja counterposed to the earlier, identity theory of Advaita Vedānta, namely that *ātman* (the self) and *Brahman* (the world-soul) are identical. Much depends, of course, on what one thinks is the relationship between mind (or soul) and body, when one says that the cosmos is God's body.

There are various theological advantages to the doctrine that the cosmos is the body of God. First, if God acts without the use of some intermediate thing on the cosmos then there is a resemblance between this and the way we move our bodies. When I raise my hand I do not need a phantom inner hand to do it. It is true I need muscles; but they are part of the pattern of my body. It may be the case, too, that there are patterns in the cosmic body, and that they are perchance intrinsic to the way God moves His body. As we typically suppose that God does not use intermediaries to act on the cosmos, it is reasonable to think of the cosmos as being God's body.

Second, thinking of the cosmos as God's body makes the notion of God as a person more accessible. We encounter embodied persons, and it requires imagination to work out what a disembodied person would be like (and it could be that there is an incoherence in the thought of a never-embodied person). If God has a cosmic body, then God is analogous to the persons with whom we are familiar.

As Rāmānuja recognized in his critique of the teleological argument,³ it is true that the cosmos is not much like an organic body. The earth does not, despite Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," breathe. Moreover, the analogy between soul-body and God-cosmos would seem to make the relation between God and the cosmos so close that God would become immediately responsible for suffering and, presumably, for human evil. This raises a further question, namely, how the analogy would relate God to human souls. Do we have to follow Rāmānuja and use the idea of God as the soul within the soul, that is, the inner controller (*antaryāmin*)?

I wish here to defend this analogy, and I hope to show that there can be a cross-cultural philosophical theology which draws on themes in the Indian tradition in order to illuminate the Christian tradition. This is no new thought, of course, but it still remains true that, although Indian writers are often interested in this project, it has not gained much influence in the West.

It is worth seeing that Rāmānuja was writing within the context of Hindu and, specifically, of Vedānta and *bhakti* theology. Thus, he needed to make sense of the great identity statements *tat tvam asi* ("that thou art"), *aham brahmāsmi* ("I am Brahman"), etc. So there was some kind of "monistic presumption" in the Indian tradition. But, paradoxically, emergent medieval Hinduism saw the great rise of *bhakti* or devotional religion, which was directed to the great gods Śiva and Viṣṇu. This devotional faith was very evident in the lyric hymns of the Tamil south, which provided the background for Rāmānuja's life. *Bhakti* made three closely related claims: God is personal; salvation is through grace, as we would say in the West; and God is properly the object of worship and adoration. All of these tended to go contrary to the monistic presumption. First, to take these claims in the reverse order, this was because worship implies the Otherness of the divine Being. The focus of worship is numerically distinct from the worshiper, and, moreover, it displays a quality of numinousness, as well as—in devotional literature—loving condescension and compassion. How does one blend the monistic assumption with the dualism of devotion? Second, the notion of grace is, in effect, a special case of the idea of the controlling power of God: as the creation is in the control of God, so the destiny of souls is in God's control; and as creative power flows forth from God, so grace flows from God to the worshiper. But the logic of monism in the strict sense is to make of the seeming plurality of the world an illusion. Third, classical monism turned upon seeing *Brahman* and *ātman* as identical, and this was achieved through concentrating chiefly on the notion of pure consciousness: the self which is one with *Brahman* is not the empirical self, but is that Self revealed in pure consciousness, where the distinction between subject and object disappears. This is excellent as a way of presenting one apex of the contemplative life. But it leaves behind personhood in its ordinary manifestation, and by analogy it bypasses the personhood of God as a Being who enters into relations with others. Not surprisingly, therefore, in the system of the Vedantic philosopher Śankara (eighth century), the Lord is himself ultimately an illusion, for Lordship implies relationship to what is itself illusory—the plural world of people and things in *samsāra* (the cycle of birth and rebirth).

If in the West there is in the theological tradition a "horror of pantheism" it doubtless arises from the perception that the monistic presumption washes away

the Otherness of God. Therefore, the monistic presumption is at least misleading, and may even be blasphemous. For blasphemy is nothing other than not paying proper reverence to God's Otherness. But the doctrine that somehow the cosmos is God's body does not in and of itself abolish the distinction between God and the worshiper. Obviously, much depends upon the way the relationship is conceived. By making suitable distinctions, Rāmānuja could present his qualified non-dualism (*viśiṣṭādvaita*) as being true both to the "monistic presumption" of the ancient tradition and to the devotional religion of the South. He also could find warrant for his position in the admittedly ambiguous structure of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*'s doctrines.⁴ The *Gītā* too was involved in a similar problem to that faced by Rāmānuja: how to blend theistic *bhakti* and the monistic presumption. For this reason, Rāmānuja's commentary has always seemed to me to give the fairest expression of the *Gītā*'s theology, so far as it can be made consistent.

But the logic of combining the monistic presumption with the theistic duality by making an analogy between God-cosmos and soul-body obviously turns on the interpretation given to this relationship. Here we have to take note of the rather different concepts of self or soul (*ātman*, *puruṣa*, *jīva*, etc.⁵) in the Indian tradition—different, that is, from some of the major motifs in the West. For one thing, it is typical in the Indian tradition to look upon the mind—or upon much of what, in the West, falls under the category of the mind—as being itself material, that is as belonging to the realm of nature. Mind is a subtle kind of matter. But the soul or self lies beyond matter. Often it is thought of as pure consciousness, which when coordinated to the psychophysical organism lights up the intellect and senses, etc., and in this way produces the stream of experience.

Perhaps more importantly for our purpose, Rāmānuja defined the soul-body relationship in a certain way: the body is that which is instrumental to the soul. He also saw soul-body as being a relationship of inseparability. The chief difference between human soul-body and the God-cosmos relation is that whereas we have imperfect control over our bodies, God has perfect control over the universe.

Another aspect of Indian thought affects the meaning of soul-body inseparability. Within the Indian tradition, reincarnation was a widely held belief, and was part of the orthodox tradition to which Rāmānuja belonged. So that although my soul is identified *through* this particular body, it is not intrinsic to the person that he or she should have this particular body. Here the Indian picture goes beyond that of, say, Strawson's *Individuals*. Not altogether dissimilarly, the universe goes through a series of pulsations—of creation, manifest process and dissolution, then quiescence and creation again, and so on. We may note here that there is a subtle, transcendent aspect to God's body, in addition to the manifest cosmos which we find around us in this particular phase of the cosmos' total history. Thus the process of creation, repeated in different phases of the cosmos, is one of transforming the subtle into the manifest body. Thus, strictly, God does not create the world out of nothing. But, as we shall see, what Rāmānuja offers is virtually the same idea.

There are various advantages to Rāmānuja's analogy. First, it stresses the continuous and all-pervasive control of God over the cosmos. Of course, this may

land us in difficulties about evil. Later, I shall say a word on Rāmānuja's way of dealing with this, though it is also worth noting that since no theist has a clearly effective or complete solution to this problem, it is not as if this objection—coming from a theist—is very damaging. Second, the analogy helps us to understand God's causality. God is not just outside the cosmos, impinging on it, but is working from within. As I have argued elsewhere,⁶ the directions "outside" and "within" are, in any event, used analogically—as is also true of the idea of mind being "in" the body—and analogical directions may not be "different" from one another in the way that their literal counterparts are. For nearly all purposes, "transcendence" and "immanence" reduce to the same concept, but the imagery is different. Rāmānuja's analogy makes it easy to think of God as working in all things, and as being "all around us." It is thus conducive to the practice of the presence of God. That is one function of a doctrine: to stimulate practice. Further, it helps us to understand God's causality insofar as God can be seen as not needing a body or any instrument to move the cosmos or a part thereof. Similarly, I do not need an extra body inside my body in order to raise my arm. Ours is direct action. This may throw light on divine omniscience: God knows everything from within.

There remains, of course, the question of souls. If God stands to cosmos as soul to body, then how does God stand to souls which are embodied inside the cosmos?

Rāmānuja thinks of God primarily as the "inner controller," who acts through individual souls. This means that we can think of the universe as having a complex make-up. Thus, the cosmos as a whole is God's body. Within the cosmos there are many souls, which are found in individual bodies, which themselves are a part of the cosmos. So I am embodied in my body which is at the same time part of God's body. But my soul is itself an expression of God, who is the "inner controller" (*antaryāmin*) within my self. Thus, God in effect generates my actions, though there is free will in that the impulses to act come from within me as an individual and are not externally compelled. The notion of the "inner controller" helps to explain the operation of God's grace. For it is God who guides me to God, by creating the good impulses which issue ultimately in my acts becoming pleasing to God, and which bring about salvation.

One reason why Rāmānuja refrained from thinking of the soul as being simply a fragment of God (although it is that in a certain sense), is that he wished to evade the implication that God gets touched or polluted by karma. Karma adheres to me as a result of the sticky interface, so to speak, with the material cosmos, but it does not adhere to God. He is untouched by suffering and evil and the bad effects of karma. Of course, karma, insofar as it is part of the moving fabric of the cosmos, is an element in God's body; it is subservient totally to God's will. It is the expression of God's moral nature, for it is by karma that good and evil fates are apportioned in relation to the relevant deeds.

Of course, not all theists accept the notions of reincarnation and karma. If we translate Rāmānuja's ideas into a more Western mode, however, it would turn out that human actions and their rewards—in heaven, hell, or purgatory—were consequences of the operation of God's moral nature, and thus the effect would be very similar to that of Rāmānuja's doctrine.

Rāmānuja's attempt to escape the consequence of God's being affected by suffering or karma is not quite successful, since it depends on a rather rigid distinction between the essence of God in Himself and His modal transformations in His body. At the very least, one must suppose that God is displeased with souls who commit evil, for it is on the basis of His pleasure and displeasure that karma itself operates. And it is hard to understand this without supposing that somehow it makes a difference to the divine Being whether He is pleased or displeased.

There may, as it turns out, be a Christian way of interpreting Rāmānuja which would cause a sea-change in the system in this respect, but which would help to reinforce the sense of intimacy which is one of the main advantages of the analogy between God-cosmos and soul-body. Before getting on to this, let us look briefly at the reason for creation. In the Jewish and Christian traditions, creation has an air of *fiat*, but also one of purposiveness. The doctrine of creation out of nothing reinforces the sense that God is not restricted by anything at all in making the world; but since God is rational, He has something in mind. This squares with the sense which one gets from the Bible of the creation as the first act within a cosmic drama and an unfolding plot. The cosmos is seen as being brought into being so that there may be a certain scenario developed.

Now Rāmānuja's thought is not without reference to the idea that the Lord has purposes to fulfill. But the main way in which the creation and dissolution of the cosmos are understood is as a kind of *līlā*, or play. Thus, the main sense of creation is as a form of spontaneous self-expression. This is the attraction of the image of the "Lord of the dance." But it does not seem too nice a dance, in that its effect is to bring about centers of consciousness—the individuals—who are, in being embodied, liable to suffer considerable miseries and pains. Thus, in this particular Indian context, the problem of evil and suffering becomes a problem of a certain exuberant callousness on the part of God. By contrast, one might think of God of the Western tradition as having vices which are more direct.

There is perhaps a way to look at the suffering in the cosmos which combines some of the thinking both of Christianity and of Rāmānuja and his school. First, it involves seeing the creation as indeed a form of self-expression by God: the cosmos exhibits the motions, so to speak, of a dancing God. But in making manifest this cosmos with its myriad conscious beings, God does not simply disregard the sufferings that accrue. God accepts the suffering from within. Incidentally, it is a strange idea that God, to be perfect, has to be untouched by sorrow. By what criterion of perfection? If it was a fine thing to evolve a world in which living creatures would have experience of the wonders of the cosmos and the ability—up to a point—to act with freedom, then it has to be accepted that it is better to exist in such conditions than not to exist at all. Would I, as an individual, prefer that I never was? It is a senseless kind of question, and yet it has force. There are people, it is true, who sometimes say that they wish they had never been born; and how can we fail to notice how such great misery can drench and poison whole lives? But the person who wishes that he or she had never been born is not a theist. A person who believes in God has hope, and, for all the sufferings of the world, a certain joy. So it is not possible for the theist to say "I wish I had never been born." That being so, the theist must somehow accept that existence

itself has some sort of glory. And it is that glory that constitutes the “reason” for God’s self-manifestation through God’s “dance.”

But saying this is not enough. I cannot just say that I am glad to have been born, without at the same time noting the depths of suffering into which so many of us are pitch-forked. I have to feel for my sisters and brothers, and to accept the suffering with the glory. And it would seem to me that the same should apply to the Creator. Having rightly made God accessible to creation and creatures accessible to God in the most intimate possible way, Rāmānuja wants to hold back, by keeping the divine soul untouched by the troubles of finitude. But if we forget this distinction between the untouched “essence” of God and his attributes, we arrive at a picture like that put forward by Christianity: that God is *within* suffering creation and bears its burdens. So, in a way, Rāmānuja’s scheme makes even more sense from the perspective of the Christian faith. This is one reason why I argued, in my *The Yogi and the Devotee*, that Rāmānuja’s thought is the most natural framework for the expression of an Indian Christian theism.

There are advantages to the analogy between God-cosmos and soul-body which have special force in modern times. For the traditional Christian, there is a certain terror in infinite space—a terror at the sheer scale of the cosmos as it has been revealed to us, through the advances in astronomy of the last fifty or so years. The scale of the cosmos is quite staggering. Amazing as our achievement may be of sending probes out to the planets, the distances are trivial when set against the vast, vast backcloth of the cosmos. The biblical picture of the world—a world which begins in 4004 B.C. or whenever, which is short-lived and of no great scale—was adequate for a scenario within which creation was merely preparing the way for the history and redemption of humanity. But we have traveled far from the tiny, geocentric cosmos depicted in the Bible. The analogy between God-cosmos and soul-body corresponds to the fact that we would *expect* God’s body to be truly staggering in its scope, prodigious in its manifestation, dramatic and explosive in its evolutions.

Further, the idea of the incarnation squares with the analogy. If God as creator has the whole cosmos as His body, then God is not, as it were, doing something alien in being an individually incarnated being. Christ becomes a microcosm of the whole. And he sums up the logic of the analogy, since human consciousness is for us a glimmering of the divine Being. We can make sense of the idea that the world is created by God only because we already experience a way in which the self-as-conscious transcends the body in which it is lodged. Thus a form of dualism seems implicit in the very idea of God. But the mind-body dualism of our human experience is thought by most as something emergent: an organism of sufficient complexity “grows” a consciousness. Consciousness comes to be thought of as a product both of individual development and evolution. But we cannot seriously see God as the emergent product of the cosmos.

This is where there is, for us, an asymmetry which Rāmānuja did not feel. If we believe in creation, we may think that the sequence is God, then cosmos, then consciousness. We experience consciousness as the product of matter, and yet must conceive of matter as the product of consciousness. However, it is worth remarking that there is no reason why we should not see conscious beings as being

the most *significant* products of nature: so that if nature itself has an origin, it may find its origin in something having this significant property.

The analogy between God-cosmos and soul-body has another virtue: it may suggest a theory of revelation. The analogy suggests that the cosmos is a mode of self-expression for God. We too express our thoughts and feelings through our body. But not all aspects of our body are equally expressive. It is rare that we can make our ankles—or the small of our back—express feelings. Some parts and movements of our bodies are much more significant than others. So it may be also that in the cosmos as a whole some parts and events are much more revelatory of the divine Mind than are others. So that although God works through all events, much as I am present to the various parts of my body, yet it is only some of these events that tell us much about the divine Being. For instance, consciousness may be a more revelatory aspect of cosmic existence than are meteors. Incidentally, we do not have to see revelation as a kind of special intervention by God, or a set of such interventions. It does not need to be miraculous. It might be that amid the flow of events some are more startlingly representative of the divine Mind than others—like an eye which suddenly winks.

Given that Rāmānuja sees God as having perfect control over his body—that is, over the cosmos and the selves within it—his doctrine of creation, or repeated creation, is more or less equivalent to the doctrine of creation out of nothing. For with this total control, God is the complete substrate or basis of the created order. God is not limited by something material outside of Himself. God is not limited in the absolute plasticity of His cosmic operations. God's dance is perfectly free. The main job of the doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation is to show that God is not a demiurge, dealing with somewhat intractable matter, which, moreover, is evil in some degree. This function is adequately fulfilled through Rāmānuja's rather different language.

It is true that Rāmānuja thinks of the cosmos as being beginningless, though pulsating in periods of quiescence and renewed creation, and so forth. God is not thereby exempt from bearing the responsibility of evil and suffering, as I have already suggested; karma and evil may be beginningless but with His perfect control, God could wipe out any inherent evil and even utterly suspend karma. Yet, as I say, Rāmānuja sees the cosmos as being everlasting in a backward direction, as well as going on *ad infinitum* forwards. This is in line with the typical picture given in the Indian tradition. This seems to be a strong contrast to the Western model of these matters. It is. But I consider it to be harmlessly so. Beginnings are important for Westerners. Life on this earth had a beginning, as did the solar system, etc. Why should it be important that the cosmos should have had a start? And in any case is not the issue an empirical one in part? Whether the cosmos has a beginning in time or not depends, in part, on the model we adopt—on the basis of the far-flung evidence—in fashioning a scientific cosmology. The Christian faith does not need a literal “In the beginning.” If someone objects, “But this is stated in the Bible,” my reply is that we no more need be literalists here than elsewhere when the relations between God and the world are being expressed.

Moreover, Rāmānuja's analogy may help to throw light upon the doctrine of the Trinity. God as Father corresponds to the Lord as the soul of the cosmos.

God as Son is a perspicuous type of the human complex of mind-body, reflecting the nature of the embodied God. God as Spirit corresponds to the "inner controller": God as inspiring and guiding the minds of human beings—and others, no doubt—as the soul of the soul.

The whole doctrine of Rāmānuja was aimed at the twin goals of interpreting the tradition and being faithful to the religion of *bhakti*. But for Rāmānuja, *bhakti* was not just a matter of feeling, but involved a kind of meditation—a continual awareness of the divine presence. In the Western tradition, this is what has been called "the practice of the presence of God." It is something which arises in Orthodoxy as at least part of the awareness generated through repetition of the Jesus Prayer. This practical side of faith is enhanced by the doctrine and the philosophy propounded. It is the ultimate point and meaning of the system of thought known as qualified non-dualism. So we may also ask how far Rāmānuja's analogy may be helpful in generating this sense of the divine presence.

Using the model provided by Rāmānuja, we can reinterpret some of the divine attributes. That God is omnipotent is summed up by saying that He has perfect control over His body. This makes God responsible in some degree for the suffering of this world, which the idea of the divine *acceptance* of suffering at least makes more palatable. That God is omniscient means that He is aware of all that goes on through His body. This is an analogue to the knowledge without observation that we have of our own bodily states.

It may be thought that the doctrine of God's body ties God too strongly to the cosmos, as though the relationship exhausts the divine nature. We do not need to suppose this. There is an analogy in regard to the cosmos—or nature—itself. We still have the idea of nature as a "thing-in-itself," or, perhaps, "process-in-itself" which presents itself to us in a certain way, through perception and our attempts to figure out its workings. There can be an analogous notion of God as "transcendence-in-itself" beyond the way God expresses Himself through nature and through His self-revelation. This is where there remains room for the *via negativa*. (I would think, incidentally, that Buddhism has the more comprehensive working out of the conceptual emptiness than does even Advaita Vedānta, but that is another matter.)

Near the beginning of this article I referred to the horror of pantheism. I suggested that it arises out of religious reasons: the fear of a kind of blasphemous assimilation of God by the worshiper. This is where the very fact that the cosmos does not seem like an ordinary organic body is advantageous in that it suggests the vast difference between the human person and God. But, in any event, the fact of the "horror of pantheism" suggests that the test of doctrines is, apart from consistency and verisimilitude, whether they produce the right spiritual attitudes.

This is a bit circular, for rightness of attitudes may in part be determined by doctrinal considerations. But let us sum up some of the possible spiritual fruits of the analogy between God-cosmos and soul-body. First, it reinforces the sense of the immediate availability and presence of the divine, both in everything around us and in the depths of our own selves. Second, it emphasizes the expressive character of the world, and suggests the old Christian and theistic tradition of seeing all that goes on in nature and in the world around us as being signs of God's

attitudes. It revivifies the sense of the meaningfulness of the flow of events. Third, it makes it easier to feel the meaningfulness of the great scale of the cosmos. Fourth, it suggests new ways of looking at the Trinity and at the Incarnation. Fifth, it yet preserves a sense of the numinous otherness and power of God, as befits a faith of worship and *bhakti*. These, then are some reasons why the Western theist might look kindly upon Rāmānuja's theology.

It may be added that in the contemporary, emerging world culture, it is important not to treat the different cultural pasts in isolation, but to move on to new kinds of intercultural debate and synthesis. This article is a small contribution to that project.

NOTES

1. Anthony Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 126.
2. I discussed some of the issues in my *The Yogi and the Devotee* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1968). I owe a lot to two fine books on Rāmānuja, John Carman's *The Theology of Rāmānuja* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) and Eric J. Lott's *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja* (Madrás: Rāmānuja Research Society, 1976).
3. The argument, forwarded by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophical school, that "God" is the efficient cause and intelligent agent of creation, parallels the teleological argument of Western philosophical theology. Cf. Ninian Smart, *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1964), pp. 153-57.
4. The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which comprises a section of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*, is the foremost classic of Indian devotional literature.
5. *Puruṣa*: "person" or "man." In the dualistic Sāṅkhya school, the world was seen as reducible to two components—*puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, roughly equivalent to "soul" and "matter" or "nature." *Jīva* is the Jain concept for "soul." Within the "materialist" frame of Jainism, karma is believed to "stick to" the *jīva*.
6. Ninian Smart, "Myth and Transcendence," *The Monist* 50 (1966).

Soft Natural Theology

Since I wrote, many years ago, that natural theology is the sick man of Europe, there have been signs of his recovery.¹ But the logic of the situation requires that the recovery can never be complete, save perhaps in heaven. I think it is salutary to spell out the reasons why natural theology—if we go on using the phrase—must at best be soft. I wish to sketch these reasons, and then add some points for future reflection.

Maybe, of course, we are only judging natural theology to be sick by reference to a concept of health that was always inappropriate. Since natural theology's meaning arises from the implied contrast with revealed theology, and since revealed theology springs from faith, there is already a pious ambience to the very idea of natural theology. It was perhaps always *fides quaerens intellectum*. Nevertheless, it has often seemed to belie this, for it seems to contain the claim that rational proofs of certain truths are a possibility: and insofar as these alleged proofs point to God there remain profound problems about them. And these profound problems relate to the reasons why natural theology remains the sick man of Europe. But I do want to say that there are more modest ways of reasoning that are relevant to religious truth, and if these constitute natural theology, it is still very relevant to our condition, and indeed growingly so.

It is obviously necessary for us to look at natural theology in the context of the real world. Despite the fact that philosophy, that is Western philosophy, has more or less completely ignored alternative points of view from Eastern and other cultures, it is more than an open secret that in matters of religion the old blinkers cannot be retained. There was a time, in the 1930s, say, when the urgencies of European conflict meant that religious debate in the West was carried

1. Ian Ramsey, ed., *Prospect for Metaphysics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), 81.

on as if the alternatives were variants of Christian theism and Western atheism; such a perspective has been diffracted by the growing awareness in the last forty years of such religions as Buddhism and Hinduism. It was indeed against that background that I placed my original discussion of natural theology's sickness. (The wider vision that I and a handful of others had was before its time²: now, that more cross-cultural purview is more commonplace.) Now it might be asked what essential difference the cross-cultural milieu makes to the project of natural theology. Does it not simply expand the variety of theisms? For already medieval thinkers had been aware of Islam and Judaism as alternative kinds of theism. What difference does throwing in Rāmānuja and Madhva and Shinran make?

One of the most important differences made by a global and cross-cultural perspective hinges upon a startling discovery. Not everyone yet realizes the nature of that discovery, but to anyone with a proper grasp of the history of religions it is—for Westerners—an amazement. It is the finding of religions that are not only nontheistic, but even non-absolutistic. That is, they are traditions whose focus is upon an ultimate that is not some personal or impersonal Substance. Such religions as Theravada Buddhism and Jainism represent a radical challenge to many of our assumptions about religion. Thus the Theravada does not wield the idea of Being: there could thus be no talk of a necessary being. The whole ontology, not just of Aquinas, but of Swinburne's *The Coherence of Theism*,³ would be swept aside as misleading. The project of showing such notions to be coherent would be thought a little naive. After the Theravada, and in parallel with certain trajectories out of early Theravadin thinking, the Madhyamika school is even more radical in its challenges.

In one way, these schools can be seen as merely adding extra voices to the debate. After all, there are plenty of critics of natural theology in the West, from Hume to Flew. But from another point of view, these schools call radically into question a whole major tradition—the mainstream of Western thinking about God and religion. But this is not a question of some incommensurable challenge, since for a very long period the debate between differing schools in India included both non-substantialist Buddhists and Hindus who argued for a substantial God in a mode not unlike their unknowing and unknown Western counterparts.

The existence of spiritual systems that do not include a serious God

2. Ninian Smart, *Reasons and Faiths* (London: Routledge, 1958), the first cross-cultural philosophy of religion in the analytic tradition.

3. Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

or even a serious Absolute doing duty for a personal God calls for deeper thoughts than that here we have a very different pattern of thinking from what we are used to in the West. It raises the issue of what the difference means in religious experience and practice. For one thing, worship becomes unimportant or at least secondary in such a system.⁴ All that cluster of ideas entangled with worship seem to be of little moment: ideas such as obedience, law, grace, devotion, love, and so on. So many of the key ideas of the Jewish and Christian and Islamic traditions fade in meaning. This does not mean that there are not others that overlap with some key concepts in parts at least of the Western traditions, such as meditation, trust, compassion, ignorance, insight, wisdom, for instance. There are convergences between Christian and Buddhist mysticism that have been well elaborated by such writers as D. T. Suzuki⁵ and Heinrich Dumoulin.⁶ Yet—and especially if we are looking to the Theravada—there are tantalizing differences, too. The Christian mystic may enter a dark night of the soul, and lose herself in a cloud of unknowing or a dazzling obscurity, and here we feel affinities with some images in the Buddhist tradition; but she also feels herself merged with Love and bathed in God, and any sense of union here with a personal Being cannot hold in the Buddhist case, where there is no such Person to merge with—no significant Other with which to become One.

One can, if one likes, do a simple thought experiment. Take a number of predicates ordinarily used of God, such as “is loving,” “creates the world,” “knows everything,” “is awe-inspiring,” and so on. Imagine they are applied to nirvana.⁷ They do not make sense then. (But, incidentally, we can well imagine them applied to Brahman or to Ultimate Reality.) There is, then, something highly different about Theravada Buddhism, and Buddhists of this tradition have long felt their deep divergence from theistic traditions in a way in which, of course, Hindus have not.

Incidentally, there is a political side to this. It happens that in modern time Hinduism has been interpreted by many Western-educated intellectuals as all-embracing. The new Advaita Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda or Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan has thought of all religions pointing to the one Truth. They are so many symbolic systems leading humans upward to the Light. If Hinduism has any advantage over

4. Ninian Smart, *The Concept of Worship* (London: Macmillan, 1972).

5. D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979).

6. Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism* (London: Routledge, 1963).

7. Donald Wiebe, ed., *Concept and Empathy* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), “Numen, Nirvana and the Definition of Religion.”

other systems, it is merely that it has recognized this unity of faiths from ancient times and has not fallen into the intolerance of certain kinds of Christianity, Islam, and so on. This doctrine of the unity of all religions has been more than a philosophical or theological one: it has been the main underpinning of India's federal pluralism and of her constitutional system of religious toleration. It was recently declared by Gandhi to be an essential feature of the Indian State. But the Buddhists of Sri Lanka never produced such a theory. Their religious ultimate was not of the right sort. Because they had no notion of the fundamental unity of all religions, they supplied no meaningful theory of the role of Christianity and Hinduism and Islam in the world or in society. At best such theisms are delusions. So Sri Lanka created no overarching ideology of toleration, and this is one of the political problems of the alienation of the Tamil minority and the consequent civil war. These observations about the political significance of the modern Hindu ideology indicate why it has enduring appeal in the contemporary world (a variant formulation occurs in John Hick's recent Gifford Lectures, for instance).⁸ It is well fitted to the needs of a pluralistic world culture. But Buddhists and historians of religion may well ask whether it be *true*. Here we come back to the deeper challenges posed by the Theravada, which have not been sufficiently presented in the West, even now.

One of the predicates in my thought experiments was "is awe-inspiring." The fact is that Otto's famous notion of the numinous experience as being central to religions fails to apply in the case of the Theravada. There may be numinous elements in the religion: the cult of images, though mostly very serene in spirit rather than awe-inspiring, does have occasions of numinosity. But the heart of the Theravada is to do with meditation and peaceful insight, with no sense of a wrathful Other. So there are consequences for our model of religious experience, or rather types of experience, when we take the Theravada seriously. Briefly, as I have argued elsewhere often enough, there are at least two major categories of religious experience, one numinous and the other mystical or contemplative. Actually, one can add other forms, too. But that implies that insofar as modern philosophy of religion makes appeal to religious experience, the appeal has to be very complex and sophisticated in terms of the history of religion. This is the main deep challenge of the Theravada: it is mysticism without God.⁹ It may be asked how this affects the future of natural theology.

8. John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (London: Collins, 1989).

9. Ninian Smart, *Buddhism and the Death of God* (Southampton, England: Southamp-

First, it ties in with a Wittgensteinian motif, namely that we need to see religious belief-statements as embedded in forms or ways of life. Or, more concretely: the history of religions is a necessary context for the philosophy of religion, and so we must note how doctrines and stories realize themselves through the actual rituals and behaviors of a religious community. These, in turn, relate to and reflect types of religious experience.

Second, more particularly natural theology can be seen as having an affective or experiential side to it.¹⁰ The cosmological arguments have a connection with the numinous, in that they help to induce a kind of vertigo: the thought "What if nothing existed at all?" or "What if the cosmos did not exist?" The teleological argument has often been tied to the elaboration of examples of the marvels of the cunning construction of the universe, especially of the living forms within the world. I suppose the necessity of God's existence and properties, which is something allegedly brought out in the ontological argument, has an emotionally satisfying aspect. Thus, Findlay seemed to think that a merely contingent God would not be worthy of worship, and of course Malcolm made much of the emotionally compelling side of the ontological argument.¹¹

But in the wider context of world religions, one would have to ask what we are to make of systems such as the Theravada and of the Madhyamika, which have no deep affection for these feelings. By rejecting the concept of substance and by being skeptical about a God they do not cultivate numinous feelings.

We can note that the radical philosophical questioning in the Madhyamika is itself perceived as being part of the process of training in meditation. Philosophy is here practical. It is to induce a different sense of vertigo. It is designed to break down ideas of substance in a way that opens up a kind of emptiness: a mental void that helps to promote the contemplative experience of the Light of Enlightenment, uncluttered by the ordinary concepts that overlay and encrust our experiential world. So here, too, as perhaps in religious natural theology (as contrasted with the merely cerebral arguments about the technical problems exhibited, for instance, in the ontological argument), philosophy is part of spiritual practice. In short, both in East and West there is a religious function of philosophizing, and for that

ton University, 1970), and K. N. Jayatilleke, *The Message of the Buddha* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975).

10. As argued recently by John P. Clayton, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), xiii, 5, "Gottesbeweise II," 724–82.

11. Ninian Smart, *The Concept of Worship* (London: Macmillan, 1972).

reason we need to pay attention to the relevant ways in which such reasoning is embedded in communities and traditions.

One way of interpreting the “form of life” idea is to think of a form of life as expressed in a specified community. It is true that theology and natural theology have occurred typically within communities. The theologian is a sort of spokesperson for a group: and thus should strictly speaking never be used without an adjectival prefix to indicate the community for which he or she speaks (Christian, Catholic, Scottish Presbyterian, Reform Jewish, and so on). We find some trouble with a case like Hans Küng: is he still a Catholic theologian, despite being disowned by the Vatican?¹² Recently, William Christian¹³ wrote an important analysis of the relations between doctrines and communities. Nevertheless, various factors have tended to erode the authority and insularity of communities. Ecumenical dialogue, inter-religious dialogue, the formation, incipiently, of a world community, metropolitan living, and various other developments mean that a more questioning and a more fluid atmosphere prevails. One may still keep the “form of life” idea, but it would be folly to look on communities as sealed from one another. Moreover, the individual makes up her own mind, often, and as such forms a community of just one.

Let us now draw together some of the threads of the discussion. First, we may note that because of the diverse history of different intellectual histories there is nothing necessary about the development of Western philosophy, and therefore of the tradition of natural theology. Any pretensions to rigor dissolve, even where argumentation may appear rigorous: because the cultural and conceptual assumptions of a given philosophical milieu are automatically challenged by alternative systems. In particular, the Theravada and Madhyamika systems challenge the Western tradition. In a sense they ally themselves with such dissolvers as Foucault, Derrida, and Rorty (though these figures do not know it yet). Second, this does not mean that natural theology is altogether without force—partly because it has a spiritual function. And the question “Why is there anything at all?” for instance does not go away even if there is no particular answer to it that is mandatory. Third, the process of arguing about natural theology merges imperceptibly into more general arguments about religious experience and practice. In the multireligious situation apparent to us in the modern world, this means that natural theology, and so

12. Though, interestingly, his status as an ecumenical Christian teacher is not in doubt.

13. William Christian, Sr., *Doctrines of Religious Communities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

on, has a very wide purview. It becomes the deployment of arguments about religious experience and practice East and West, North and South.

Apart from this, it is worth noting that the very distinction between religious and nonreligious worldviews is a Western, and culture-bound, one. It is useful legally in relation to tax laws and separation of church and state. It is useful as a form of self-deception for secular intellectuals, who can start from, say, a Marxist perspective and assume that this is a cleaner way of dealing with the world than flaunting Catholic assumptions or whatever. But it has rather little substance as a distinction, unless one places very strong emphasis (which not all religions do) on the transcendental reference of religion as its defining characteristic. As we shall see, the idea of transcendent-directed experiences is important, but not necessarily as a defining characteristic of religions *per se*. Had the comparative study of religion begun in China rather than in Northern Europe and America, it would be doubtful whether a strong distinction between religions and secular ideologies would have been made. For this reason I prefer to use the term "world view analysis" rather than "comparative religion" and the like. In terms of world view analysis, the arguments of natural theology and its periphery stretch out even wider. We can ask questions such as "Is it reasonable to trust the transcendently oriented experiences of prophets and/or mystics?" or "Is it reasonable to think of any tradition as authoritative as to revelation?" Such questions are vital ones, but they consciously incorporate the possibilities of various atheistic and agnostic world views as alternatives to religious ones. In short, the theologies are not insulated from the real world.

The reflective intellectual's task is no doubt to think about the criteria by which we might attempt to settle questions about religious choices. Consider the choice seemingly presented as between the prophetic tradition of Israel and of early Christianity and the contemplative tradition of Buddhism. Each ignores, for the most part, the main experiential values of the other. But in the wide world of human history, we find that both types of experience have been important. There seems plausibility in accepting either both types as telling us something about the ultimate, or neither—rather than discriminating between them. It is true that tensions, which can be amply demonstrated in the history of religions, exist between them, since the one sort tends to stress the gap between the human being and the ultimate, whereas the other tends to emphasize identity. The turbulence of the numinous and the passions of devotional religion on the one hand contrast with the serenity of the contemplative life on the other. But such tensions need not be contradictions.

It appears to me that such reflections do not themselves depend upon revealed ideas or images. It is true that revelations may reflect differing kinds of religious experience plus diverse cultural and other circumstances. But the above reflections raise general issues about human nature and the possibilities of access to the ultimate and, as such, belong in a general way to natural theology. Thus one way in which natural theology may develop is in the direction of general reflections upon the history of religions.

Another way of regarding this is from the inside of various religious traditions.¹⁴ It is obvious that every tradition needs to have a sensitive view of every other, and to engage in questions that get posed from the outside, whether by other religious traditions or by nonreligious world views. The task of engaging in debate with other world views corresponds, in the modern world, to what once was known as natural theology.

Philosophically, this means a cross-cultural engagement with the arguments of other traditions: the Christian theologian of the future, for example, will need to engage dialectically with the Madhyamika critique of all positions.

Now I think it will become obvious that all argumentation and attempted proofs of one position over another, or of one element over another, will not yield clinching results. It is not merely that natural theology in the old sense is, to say the least, controversial and doubtful: but this wider interreligious and inter-world-view discussion is necessarily soft as to conclusions. While it is unreasonable to become a relativist, the non-relativism which we will retain will have to be soft. No proofs, except rather trivial ones, could be offered as to world views. It seems therefore to me that the directions of natural theology lie towards a world-wide discussion issuing in a soft non-relativism. This is for some people rather unsatisfying, to say the least. Many yearn for certainty of faith, authority, and clearcut directives. These seem to me to be impossible to attain, for in the plural world of today everyone has only one foot in her own tradition. The Pope may teach *this*, but we know that others teach *that*. We are called upon, by our education and circumstances, to call all authority into question. We may feel strongly that our own position is the truth, but we cannot produce proofs, only reasons. Perhaps that itself is the nature of faith or trust. We may trust the Buddha or have faith in Christ: but we are irrational if we think there is any proof of the authority of either leader.

14. See such publications as Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, eds., *Concilium* 183, *Christianity Among World Religions* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1986).

Such a softly non-relativistic world encourages blends and adoptions.¹⁵ It encourages, too, personal experimentations. No longer will traditions themselves have a traditional traditionalism. People will affirm them because they have a choice, or reject them. An affirmed, consciously chosen tradition has a different character from a traditional tradition.

There are still questions as to what remains for the older natural theology: for the attempts to frame a cosmological or teleological or ontological argument. One thing is that we need to absorb into that perspective parallel concerns in India with arguments for God's existence, for rebirth, and so on. In my view, there remain some elements of force in the cosmological and teleological arguments, and a hypothetical ontological argument may have force, that is, if God exists her existence will be necessary. But none of these reasonings are probative, of course. The gap between the Cosmos-Explaining Being suggested by a version of the cosmological argument and the fleshed-out God that the Christian, Jew, or Hindu encounters in her tradition is still there: bare theism has little purchase on human feelings or commitments. Thus traditional natural theology turns out to be an indication of possible supporting reasons for a fleshed-out belief that itself is what might be described as a kind of live and living hypothesis. It might be a hypothesis held with certitude, as, too, with certain political commitments, but not with public certainty, for none can exist in the plural domain of religions.

University of California at Santa Barbara

15. Ninian Smart, *Beyond Ideology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).



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IV

PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS



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CHAPTER 24

The Convergence of Religions

In this paper I wish to explore a new notion of the unity of religions and world-views, by placing that unity in the future rather than identifying it as a living essence now or as a past reality. In order to argue in this manner I need to explore the notion of a tradition, as well as examine an important question arising from the definition of religion. It is as well too to reflect upon the present condition of the world, not only as to its divisions but also in regard to the changes which conduce towards international unity. So first, let me sketch out some relevant features of today's planet; second, I shall deal with the definitional question; third, I shall adumbrate a theory of traditions; and then I shall unfold my view of the convergence of religions.

It might be thought optimistic to look for convergence; what about divergences and conflicts? What about resurgent Iranian Shi'a Islam? And American right-wing evangelicalism? (The Rev. Adrian Rogers was elected on June 10, 1986, to the presidency of the U.S.A.'s largest denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, and among other things spoke out for more love and less liberals.) What about religious and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland and many other places? But such conflicts in large measure stem from various insecurities: so part of the solution at least is political and economic, and a theory of the convergence of religions can at least help to promote the conditions for such a solution.

Some relevant features of today's world. Since World War II some crucial changes have occurred affecting ideas of the unity of the world. First, there has been decolonialisation and the spread of the sovereign nation-state over the *terra firma* of the world, so that only Antarctica is exempt from national boundaries. Although this has reinforced the concept of the nation, there have been other forces undermining national sovereignty. Second, the globe is increasingly an integrated economic system, despite the existence of a non-capitalist socialist wedge of economies.

Even they perform play the capitalist game to an important degree. Third, political upheavals and wars have created an unparalleled number and variety of refugees, so that most cities of the world have become ethnically diverse, if they were not so already. So it is common for people of one culture and religion to live in proximity with another such group. Fourth, travel is swift (in fact culturally speaking instant, so that no significant time separates Muslims in Britain and Natal, or Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Los Angeles), and other forms of communication are highly developed. This means that transnational loyalties and associations can be significantly reinforced, and this solidifies religions, sciences, ethnic groupings and all manner of associations. Fifth, as part of economic integration there is a growing number of powerful transnational corporations, effectively without national allegiance if they so wish: this foreshadows a new 'imperialism' without a home—the world ruled by these corporations, owing no real acknowledgement of the power of any people outside of themselves. Sixth, the combination of the invention of computers, big rockets and hydrogen bombs has created the possibility of the destruction of a large part of the human race in a brief time.

All these factors combine to favour some agreement on a world-view to inform human values in the globe. But at the same time there are very serious political ideological conflicts, between conservative and resurgent religions and both Marxist and Western democratic ideals. Many of the insecurities stem from the invasion of one socially constructed world by others, whether it be Western values carried by trade and the media in traditional societies in the so-called Third World, or alien ethnic groups settling in the West, or by religious challenges to Marxist orthodoxy in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. So we have a situation in the world where there are forces making for some kind of overarching world-view, which will both express and promote the concept of 'one humanity'; while there are also forces making for fanaticism and the feverish search for certainties. I feel that it is not feasible to go straightaway for some single religio-political ideology: it is not realistic. But it may be that we can hope for some lesser convergence soon, between the softer wings of the great religions and some of the values of democratic pluralism. Maybe such a 'first-stage convergence' will prepare the way for a more embracing 'second-stage convergence'.

I do not think it is wise for religions and ideologies to be untrue to themselves. But though the Christian (for instance) or the Buddhist should not abandon her unique claims, there may be ways, as we shall see, when it will be possible to select out and to stress those aspects of the tradition which favour true conversation and overlap with other traditions.

A question of the definition of religion. It is bad enough trying to come up with a clear and persuasive definition of Christianity or Buddhism; let alone (as is well known) with a definition of religion. But pragmatically we distinguish between religions and secular ideologies. Although it is true that often an ideology may function like a religion (East German Marxism functions somewhat thus—it has

doctrines and myths or sacred narratives, an ethos and rituals, such as national festivals and the like, and it has institutions to propagate its teachings, etc.), it is slightly strange, to put it no more strongly, to treat it as a religion *tout court*. First, its members would object. Second, it rejects traditionally religious ideas (such as God, transcendence, immortality, revelation and so on). Third, it seems better to conceive of the Marxisms as kinds of world-view, belonging to the species 'secular' or non-religious, as opposed to the species 'religious world-views'. So it may be that our proper study here is the analysis and evaluation of world-views ('World-view Analysis' for short rather than, say, 'Religious Studies').

It is sensible to take secular and religious world-views together, for often we encounter blends of world-view (e.g. of nationalism and a religion, as in many instances; and modernism and a religion, etc.). Moreover in so far as we see conflicts between say Marxism and traditional religions, we have to treat both parties in the same basket. In all this we have to see world-views as incarnated, so to speak, for in their living forms they are embedded in social and political institutions, in daily rituals and in sentiment, and not just in beliefs. But though I think it is important to extend the study of religions to the study of world-views in general, of both species, I shall in this paper be chiefly concerned with the convergence of religions.

A theory of traditions. Although traditions these days are in some respects becoming much more ecumenical, because of faster communications and because of the extra solidarity called forth by recognition of minority status in a single world, this is largely a latterday development. The fact is that over much of their history the great traditions were divided into a whole number of sub-traditions. For instance, consider the following variety of Christianities, itself of course not a complete, but only a very partial, list: Ethiopic Christianity, Roman Catholicism Orthodoxy, Unitarianism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Kimbanguism, Congregationalisms, Quakerism, the Mennonites, Amish, Southern Baptists, the Ratana Church of New Zealand, Epicopalism, etc. Even with Catholicism there is a complex variety of national traditions and movements—from Irish and Polish Catholicism to Mexican and from liberation theology to *Opus Dei*. For obvious reasons, then, there is difficulty in summing up the essence of Christianity in a neat formula. It is better for historical purposes to talk of 'Christianities' rather than 'Christianity' (and Buddhisms, Humanisms, and so forth). So though adherents may believe in a single normative tradition they usually think of it as incarnated solely or mainly in their own sub-tradition. Or at least this was the position until modern ecumenism has changed the position. Let us consider the position of the sub-traditions in this pre-ecumenical phase.

If one were to ask what divided the Roman Catholic and the Baptist, one could look to difference of emphasis and interpretation regarding the Bible and subsequent tradition. Though the Baptist would in fact make use of some categories, such as the Trinity, which were the product of reflection and Christian agree-

ment three centuries roughly after the events of the Gospels, the Baptist would see his doctrines as reflecting essentially the life of the early Church. Yet in many ways his life would be unlike that ancient example: he would have chapels or church buildings, the ethos of (say) 19th century America, fundamentalism about the New Testament narrative not yet in existence during the time of the events of the Gospels. His clothes, food, sexual milieu, political placement, language, cultural outlook would all be diverse from that of the Church he was trying to imitate. What he would have however would be the emphasis on certain themes which crop up in the New Testament. He would reject other themes which were made much of by the Roman Catholic. The commission of Peter would not be stressed, nor the idea of bishops as they were understood in the patristic period and beyond. The worship of the two communities would be very divergent in spirit and substance. The very idea of a priest would be quite different. We could go on. In short, the two branches of the Christian faith would have worked on overlapping material and stressed quite diverse things in the collage, and so would come out with very different pictures. They would have been selectively divergent in interpretation of the scriptures and in the admissibility of other elements.

One could here talk if one wished about differences in hermeneutics. But I would prefer to say that the two sub-traditions had built different collages out of overlapping materials and roughly speaking the same past. They had projected their views on to the past. Their positions were differing creative uses of the Christian past. Of course they would not even admit that the other had got the past right. They would of course differ too in their telling of the tale. But we can see what is happening as the reworking of the past. The judgements are not proleptic, looking ahead, but refashioning backwards, analeptic. In a sense the very idea of Christianity as a whole is analeptic—it is our way of making sense of a whole swathe of human history ('the rise and development of Christianity'). So my theory of traditions and sub-traditions can be described as the doctrine that traditions are analeptically expressed. To say it more cheerfully: the past is the only thing we can change, and we do it all the time. The past in itself is as it were a noumenon. The phenomena are the diverse pasts which different groups project. And in this case they do more than project pasts—they cause these to become normative. They are so many sacred narratives. Obviously the past of the pre-ecumenical Baptist is a different sacred narrative from that of the Roman Catholic.

To say that our pasts are analeptically arrived at, is pregnant with various consequences. One among them is to cause us to think about the future. How will future Christians and Buddhists be analeptic about our present age? What new selectivity of materials will make up their collages in the next century and beyond? Are there elements in the great religions which they will fuse and juxtapose? To what degree will they emphasise the openness of their traditions?

So my theory of sub-traditions emphasises analeptic selectivity. It is often

the task of the figure who helped to create a new sub-tradition (men and women such as Luther, Calvin, Menno, Fox, Hui Neng, Shinran, Nichiren and many others) to bring to the surface on the basis of his or her own experience and creative thought some feature of the main tradition which is moved into center place within the new collage. Later, ecumenism in trying loosely at least to embrace the different collages, reconstructs a new picture of the main tradition. Of course ecumenism is itself a sub-tradition, because there will remain some groups in the overall tradition who will reject any overarching organisational umbrella, and may reject substantial parts of the ecumenical platform (thus Southern Baptists reject the World Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the W.C.C., etc.). It is part of the genius of human religion that it rejects too much uniformity in the long run.

Openness to other religious traditions than one's own itself represents a theme which tends to belong to the modern and liberal versions of the traditions. It is not always so: doctrine may sometimes demand such positive thinking, as in the medieval Catholic doctrine of natural theology and the concept that human beings who are without benefit of the Gospel may yet arrive at their own knowledge of God. But it is generally the 'freer spirits' in the traditions who reach out favourably to other faiths in dialogue and co-operation. The sources in modernity and liberalism are easily accounted for. It is only in the modern period that serious knowledge of one another has arisen in the great religions (there are precursors to the modern period, however, in early medieval Spain and in the India of the Emperor Akbar). Also liberal ideas, by loosening up the rigidity of relying on textual authority and the like, helps to suggest that the Christian or the Hindu may learn something from other traditions. Education is often helpful, in often combining modernity and liberalism. But sometimes the learning is much more intuitive: Gandhi learned from the Gospel, and Martin Luther King Jr. learned from Gandhi. *Ahimsā* had its day in Montgomery, Alabama.

The problem of religious convergence. It is of course tempting to think of all religions as pointing to the same Truth, and this helps to resolve the problem, we would hope, of the struggle between traditions. But there are severe problems with the Vivekananda-Radhakrishnan-Aldous Huxley kind of 'Perennial Philosophy' (and even with its latter-day version as found in the writings of John Hick). The difficulties may be stated briefly: First, you have to postulate a single Reality of which God, Christ, Brahman, Śiva and so forth are the varied manifestations; but this does not account for Jainism or Theravāda Buddhism, which do not incorporate belief in such a Reality. Indeed Jainism and Buddhism are major counter-examples to most religious theories which in dealing with the sacred seem to imply a crypto-sacramentalism and an orientation to Gods which is unrealistic. Second, the thesis of one thread running through religions is usually stated in terms of the mystical or contemplative strand: and in a way this is a valid observation, save that it does not deal adequately with those kinds of religion, for instance Scottish Calvinism, which have a much more numinous emphasis, and do not take much account

at all of the contemplative track. In short, the Perennial Philosophy is an incomplete register of the variety of religious experience. Third, those who accept the Perennial Philosophy still have to deal with all those adherents of religions who do not accept it. It is as if it itself becomes an extra religion.

Despite these problems, the quest for convergence is not unreasonable. As we shall later see, our theory of traditions may help here. But let me here remark that as far as living together in the world goes, the problem of tolerance is more important than simple agreement on substance. Now some traditions, or rather powerful sub-traditions, sometimes build in political theories which inhibit toleration. But the world situation may help in this respect, since it is only possible for incarnated world-views to practise intolerance within defined national limits. Thus a Shi'a Muslim if he lives in the United States is precluded from applying certain aspects of Shi'a law as interpreted in Iran. He can do nothing to Babāi's, beyond arguing against them within the rules of a religiously pluralistic society. As the unity of the world at least economically and in some loose way politically is more clearly perceived, every major tradition and sub-tradition will see itself within the global framework to be in the minority. So it may be that an epistemological consideration will become more widely seen: namely that as between opposed ideological or religious positions no proof is possible, even if conversion can occur on some other basis. There are reasons no doubt for believing one thing rather than another. The beauty and depth of the language of the Qur'ān no doubt is a reason for seeing it as divine revelation and the expression of the divine mind. But the beauty and depth are not by themselves anything like proofs of the divine provenance of the Qur'ān. If you already believe in the divinity of the Qur'ān then you can begin to prove a lot of things in Islamic faith. But that is a very different thing from absolute proof. It is conditional or hypothetical proof. And the conditions on which it depends are not probative. They are rather soft grounds, about which reasonable people could have different opinions. There are other explanations of how such a marvelous book came out of the mouth of Muhammad. So ultimately, although there are reasons for belief, it is still a matter of faith. Of course we knew this already, but actually religions have often carried on—e.g. Christianity over Jewish obstinacy in interpreting the Old Testament differently (as Hebrew Bible)—as if there were proofs, and as though heresy therefore had to be wilful.

All this shows that the epistemology of religions, and more broadly world-views, is soft. On ultimate positions and our frameworks of cosmic meaning there can be no proofs or disproofs. Even the thought that a religion must be false because it believes that it can prove its own position is not decisive, since the religion might easily change its epistemology (and most religions have, over time, done just that). There is then no need to be relativists, and to assume that each world-view is a closed system impenetrable by others. We assume that the Hindu swami and the Benedictine monk have a basis for talking to one another. So, the position which we adopt here is what I call 'soft non-relativism'. It seems to us

that this epistemology is an obvious one. It has ethical consequences: primarily that society has no right to impose one world-view rather than any other one, except to adopt it may be as its historical heritage. (But it in no way follows that citizens should then be forced to obey it and believe it—as if anyone really can be forced to believe anything.)

So as a higher-order belief we may recommend soft non-relativism. It is a viewpoint which is likely to grow, since it is a natural reaction to diversity of belief to take the line that we should not dismiss alternatives to one's own tradition out of hand. This is why the comparative study of religion has often been viewed with suspicion as making people comparatively religious. It can open windows to scepticism. But it is a poor advertisement for any faith that it can only maintain itself by concealing the existence of powerful alternatives. Even if it be argued that some religion-based societies depend on religious legislation which gives coherence and so we cannot tolerate, except within very strict limits, divergences of world-views from the faith that gives meaning to the lives of the society, this position can hardly work in a global framework. If people who diverged were allowed (and indeed assisted) in going to some other more pluralistic country, then maybe we could conceive of this as a mode of existence within the wider pluralism—let us say a monolithically Islamic Iran and Lutheran Iceland amid a sea of pluralistic and mixed societies. But even this is not very realistic, for how is it that Iranians should be so homogeneous? They have not been in the past. There seem objections to forcing any people to keep to a State religion or ideology. So in this sense our soft non-relativism is subversive. My feeling here is that it is also the pattern of the future, since it has become impossible for any land to isolate itself from the rest (some have tried, such as Burma and the Khmer Rouge, and China for a while, and Albania), but eventually the barriers will crumble. We have not yet experienced the fullness of modern communications. As video-cassettes get miniaturised, and new means of intercontinental broadcasting are devised, it will become quite difficult to control information and to isolate a population in order to make it conform. Our knowledge of modern societies which have experienced long years of internal propaganda, secret police and rewards for conformity indicates how ineffective these modes are ultimately in controlling people's thoughts. People emerge from such long years remarkably sturdy in their real beliefs. So the soft non-relativism I have outlined may be the pattern of the future, as I have said, because it represents a common sense reaction to the fact of deep pluralism.

It is true that there are reactions against liberalism. In so far as soft non-relativism is a liberal position (though some forms of modern liberalism have been arrogantly sure of themselves) it may itself attract reactions. Some people will want certainty. But more importantly it has happened in modern history that cross-cultural studies have come to many peoples in the clothes of colonialism. The impact of Christianity was mixed in with the experience of new forms of education, science, military methods and so on. Given these Western clothes, some forms of liberalism themselves appear imperialistic. Thus there can be a severe backlash

against such 'soft' views as being corrosive of older values, representative of a destructive West and as a menace to religious tradition. So backlash movements especially in the Third World are to be expected. But despite this it will also, I suspect, be readily perceived that there are brave and grand alternative world-views on offer and that it is inappropriate to be fanatical. A more pragmatic spirit will prevail. In brief, then, part of further convergence may lie at the higher level of values, in agreeing to mutual toleration between the diverse faiths, at least.

We may now return to our more substantive enquiry, as to whether some way in the future new forms of the mainstream religious traditions may emerge in which a greater openness to other traditions will become a dominating factor. There are elements to build on in all the major religions. I am not here suggesting that we homogenise religions. Their separate kinds of approach and spirit should and will be preserved anyway. But openness to other faiths can be fruitful, and can occur in an open lattice-like way. So the Theravāda Buddhist may see kinship among the Christian mystics, and there are affinities between Buddhist and Christian ethics. The Muslim faithful may recognise kindred folk in the *bhakti* adherents of the Hindu tradition and among *bhakti* devotees in Christian Methodism and elsewhere. There is nothing very new in such recognitions, but they need to be built upon, and given emphasis in future collages. All this, however, implies a softening of soteriology, and a recognition at least that it is not for us to know who is saved and who not. There may emerge from this arm-link unity (not sacrificing uniquenesses therefore) a sense of the positive. The importance of any faith or world-view lies not just in its supposed truth but in its fruits: its capacity to bring joy, assurance, love, brotherhood to human beings. This criterion of fruits is hard to apply since diverse cultures emphasise diverse fruits; but it at least will shift the locus of inter-religious argument. Often a Hindu will say 'Indian marriage lasts better: it is better to fall in love with the person whom you marry, than to divorce the person that you have ceased to love'. There are imponderables here or comparison, but the emphasis is correct. A system of marriage is to be judged by the way it gives happiness, dignity, freedom. And so the new emphasis in the future will be more of the form 'What is the contribution of the Christian faith to world civilisation and to modern life in our new one world?' The fact that Christianity has much to offer in no wise means that other traditions and sub-traditions do not have much to offer also.

It is also for the traditions to offer constructive criticism of one another. The philosophy of the Mādhyamika may remind Christians and Jews of the critical thought of Dionysius the Areopagite and of Maimonides. It may stir new ways of steering past anthropomorphism and the problems of literalism in religion. Christian social action may provide a reminder to the Tibetan monk or the Hindu guru that disciples should think of working in the world and not always beyond it. Also, since one of the themes that exists among some major religions is that of prophecy, the religions might remember that their deeper view of human happiness and of human sorrow can provide a base from which to offer a critique of the shallow values of much modern day society.

Who knows how traditions may reinterpret themselves in the future? Will Christianity, Judaism and Islam ever come to see themselves truly as equal ways of developing out of the same roots? Will Muslims come to see the Hindu tradition as genuinely monotheist? (Or at least theist?) If ideas sown now (for instance those of R.C. Zaehner's *Convergent Spirit* and Kenneth Cragg's dialogical works exploring Islam) can flourish they may come eventually to dominate ecumenical thinking within mainstream Christianity. The encouragement of counterpart openness will then in the future lead to a change in the understanding of the various messages of the great religions. From a Christian angle, for instance, it may become a commonplace to see the Spirit at work in all of world religious history.

And evil? The horror of the Holocaust ought to remind us of anti-Semitism in the writings of Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Aquinas, Luther. In so reminding us it can depressingly reinforce soft non-relativism. The fruits of religion are not all sweet, and they are as often poisonous as nourishing. The Christian faith has a great burden to bear, as also does the spirit of nationalism, of which the Nazis were merely an extremely chauvinist example. War and arrogance and groupism (despising other groups as inferior to your own) are as human as smiles and apple-pie and curry. There is not much point, though, in dwelling on the evils of the past, save to remind ourselves of imperfections of the future.

One of the major consequences of looking at the traditions as analeptic creations is that we may look at all history like that. One of the things that will happen, hopefully, is that human beings will have a genuine sense of world history. In place is the symbolism of one world—those ravishing pictures of the planet Earth from space. With the evolution of a cross-cultural sense of world history will inevitably grow a federal idea of the religions, as contributing different cultural streams to the one river of history, yet retaining too their separate identities. So I would see the shape of a convergent sense of the religions as having a federal character. We do not need the monolithic model of the one Reality. We may have a looser sense of overlapping themes, each of which will provide a lesson in spiritual values for the whole human race. The dazzling obscurity of the mystic, the loving *bhakti* of the pious, the suffering God or Bodhisattva, the concept of being a light to others, the ethics of brotherhood and compassion—all these themes and many more will link religions, like arms, and they hopefully will be available to teach humankind. Maybe one day we shall have a peaceful federal world in which the religions will provide riches for the world's school. In this way we may achieve convergence without sacrificing particularities.

Democracy and pluralism. Modern liberal democracy, though at one time arrogant in its rationalism, white-oriented in its cultural heritage and more easily instantiated in relatively homogeneous populations represents now a more pluralistic way than its major alternatives (especially State Marxism). As such it is an ideology which can naturally go with the religious federalism urged in this paper. It is important also for small-scale peoples, who have great difficulty in preserving

effectively their cultural heritages, to choose a form of political organisation which will favour such preservation. It also happens that the openness, relatively speaking, of modern democracies blends with the needed critical openness in which science flourishes. So there is a convergence between federalism, democracy and scientific exploration which itself is favourable to a plural convergence of the great religions. But it is hard to achieve such federalism and social openness without at the same time solving the economic problems besetting the Third World especially.

Whether we can steer capitalism in this direction, of openness and social compassion, remains to be seen, but it represents an ideal which the religions can prophetically point to, if only they can overcome their trenchant suspicions of the liberal and soft-minded ethos of the present paper.

But the program and hope which we have here presented does constitute one stage of convergence : the first main stage. After that we can worry too about how to get the Marxist part of the world to loosen its grip in ways which will be compatible to religious and other kinds of pluralism. There are signs of such loosening in China, for instance.

But things may turn out otherwise. The great alternative is the nuclear war. Few would survive that, mostly I suppose in the South Pacific. If we avoid that catastrophe, we shall still have to live forever with the knowledge of fission and the blinding light. The need to tame our human nature forever is terrible in its urgency. So far as we can see peace comes best where people are not threatened. So how can we have openness to truth and a spirit of human love, without appearing to be threatening liberals?

A Contemplation of Absolutes

John Hick's well-known doctrine of the Real and its phenomenal manifestations invites us to consider differing ways of conceiving the distinction. More especially, we are drawn to think through the problems posed by the style of language we use for the Real. For, in using Kantian or quasi-Kantian vocabulary (for instance John Hick refers to the Real *an sich*), we are inevitably left exposed to some of the classical critiques of the *ding an sich*. By contemplating these we may stimulate some further thoughts about the ultimate referent or referents of religious language.

It was always, of course, a problem of whether we are right to think of the Real as singular. Again, there is the issue of ontology: should we be thinking at all of some kind of substantive Real? Or would it be better to think of process or energy or some dynamic notion to characterise the ultimate? And again, should not the ultimate be a mere placeholder, with no lineaments at all, but just providing the space, so to speak, to lodge whatever each religious tradition takes as ultimate? Though these are abstract-sounding questions, they have some practical meaning.

For if we take the Real *an sich* to be a substantive entity for which the various religions have differing names, then the moral might be that it does not in the long run matter which faith you adopt, though there might be relatively minor disputes as to which set of values you practically espouse: religions might be critical of each others' practical behaviour up to a point, but beyond this there would be little point in disputation. Most missionary activity could be phased out, with profit, since people would not be misled into thinking that their own Real was not the same as that of others. Undoubtedly such a conclusion would be irenic, and part of the intention of perennial philosophers, including John Hick, is undoubtedly peaceful and ecumenical.

I wish to argue in the first place that a Buddhist notion of an Empty or completely open 'Absolute' may be what is called for. I shall then proceed from there to comment on the variety of shapes of the ultimate.

The first point to note is that a main problem of the language of 'the Real' is that it inevitably suggests that there is a single something which lies in back of all the noumenal deities and so forth, from Śiva to Christ and from the Tao to Brahman, projected by the varied traditions upon it. All these phenomenal deities and the like are so many representations of the one Real. But if we are to continue using Kantian language then it follows that we should not be using either the singular or the plural of that which is noumenal.

But it may be responded that it is natural to think of the Real as singular because the phenomenal ultimates are singular. That is to say, Judaism looks to one God, and Śaivism does too, and there is but one Tao and one Brahman in their respective traditions. It becomes easy to think that somehow Śaivites and Jews are worshipping the same God, and behind that the same Real. Well, it may indeed be that many great religions have a single Focus. But it does not follow that the various Foci refer behind themselves to One Reality. We might put this point in a different way by saying that the abstractness of the idea of the noumenon means that we can infer no resemblance between what lies behind and what is phenomenal. Or we might otherwise say that if the ultimate Focus is plural (perhaps the Trinity is plural or maybe we should think of some plural emanationist theology such as that of Neoplatonism) then, in so far as it refers behind, it refers to a plural entity, and if it is singular then the Real is singular. But strictly the Real should be neither singular nor plural since it lies in an inaccessible realm beyond numbers. It is ineluctably beyond space and time, the framework for applying numbers.

But what about those notions that there is an aspect of the divine known as *nirguna* Brahman? Is not this somehow affirming the existence of a Real? But John Hick is clear about this, and I here note from his article in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*:

At this point . . . one might object that in Hindu and Buddhist thought *brahman* and *nirvāṇa* and *śūnyatā* are not forms under which the Real is humanly known but are the Real itself, directly experienced in a unitive awareness in which the distinction be-

tween knower and known has been overcome. The gods may be forms in which the Real appears to particular human groups; but *brahman*, or *śūnyatā*, is reality itself directly apprehended. Nevertheless, this claim is called into question by the plurality of experienced absolutes with their differing characters – for the *brahman* of Advaita Vedānta is markedly different from the *nirvāṇa* of Theravāda Buddhism and from the *śūnyatā* of the Mahāyāna, and this very variety suggests a human contribution to these forms of mystical experience. . . .¹

So it is clear that the absolutes, however clothed in the negative way, are themselves phenomenal Foci of aspiration. It is muddled to think of them as directly being the Real. They are still conceptualised and experienced as phenomenal, albeit at a very high and interior level of phenomena. The fact that the subject-object distinction does not typically apply to this kind of non-dual experience in no way detracts from its experiential character. We may note in passing that usually the negative path is prominent in those phases of religion which emphasise the interior, mystical experience (rather than prophetic visions and devotional encounters with the personal Other, i.e. the world of what Otto calls the numinous).

It would seem, then, that the Real is neither one nor many. It can by the same token be questioned as to whether it is Real, as we have already indicated. That is, why should we take it as being a sort of substance? Some writers, such as Tillich, have perhaps brought out the point that it is not exactly a thing, because it is not in space and time or space-time, by using the phrase 'being itself'. But even *being* as a notion contains something like the ghost of thingness. We could use the concept *becoming*, for instance, which is equally empty, but does not suggest substantiality. Or we might turn to such alternatives as *process* or *energy*. Why not?

Indeed, there are philosophical thoughts which might turn one away from being. They are various. First, some religious philosophies are not substance-bound, such as Theravāda Buddhism, which does not make out that *nibbāna* is some kind of thing. Second, there are forms of cosmology which are hooked to the notion of events or processes rather than substances, such as Whitehead's metaphysics. Since these event-philosophies can be used to express religious ideas, they postulate non-substantial religious absolutes. Third, there are languages such as Chinese where the difference, at

least in classical forms, between substances and processes is fluid. In such languages the sky skies and the tree trees.

So far we conclude that the ultimate is neither singular nor plural and is neither being nor becoming. That is, it is unwise, not to say contradictory, to look on the ultimate as belonging to categories that essentially belong to the world of phenomena. This, of course, poses a problem in relation to the categories used in a religion. For instance, in the Christian tradition, however much it might be affirmed that God is not to be described as this or that, She or He is worshipped as being personal. It is hard or impossible in the last resort to think of God, in that tradition, as non-personal. And so we assume that the properties of the Focus are projected back upon the entity or whatever lying behind. Still, let us pursue the path to that noumenal ultimate which is neither being nor becoming and neither singular nor plural; does this not remind us of Emptiness or *sūnyatā* in the Mahāyāna tradition?

There would be interesting consequences of identifying the noumenal with Emptiness. It would be easy enough, no doubt, to generate a Nāgārjuna-like dialectic which would show that the noumenal is the Empty, or the Open.³ The argument would go as follows. First, the non-cosmic, not belonging to space-time where entities are identifiable and re-identifiable,³ is such that it is transcendentally oblivious to numbers and counting. It is, of course, not difficult to conceive the uncountable: for instance, it does not make sense to say that love is one or many, or at least not serious sense. It is true, of course, that there are many lovers and many acts of love: but love is something observable in the world which yet is neither many things nor one thing. It is an aspect of life, I guess, but this hardly means that it is one thing.

Moreover, the notion of being or becoming as lying 'behind' what is presented phenomenally in human experience relies on a metaphor, that of 'behind' (or 'beneath' or 'beyond', etc.). Figuratively it is visualised by us perhaps as lying on the far side of a screen of phenomena. Such a metaphor or analogy happens to be quite common in religion. It is part of the meaning of transcendence which, after all, is simply a latinised extension of the idea of being *beyond* as in *trans*. It is an intelligible notion, but it is not a literal one. Obviously what lies beyond the cosmos, as a Real or *ding an sich*, cannot be literally on the other side of the phenomenal, since the latter is embedded in space-time, and so the conception of what lies on the

other side of space has to be a metaphor. 'To be the other side of' means to be in a part of space different from that of which it is on the other side. To be in a different area of space from space makes no literal sense. Consequently the Real or *ding an sich* is only metaphorically beyond or behind what is phenomenal.

So what does the idea amount to that the Focus of worship or mystical experience, or whatever – that is, the presentation of the ultimate in human thought and experience – refers back to the Real behind? Is there some lingering notion left over from Kant's things in themselves that they somehow give rise to phenomena? This, however, does not make sense. Or at least it does not from a strictly Kantian perspective. Causation applies to phenomena: it does not apply to what lies beyond phenomena. So noumena cannot give rise to anything. They are a feeble set of anchors thrown out in order to suggest that phenomena really have something to do with what lies 'out there'. But, strictly speaking, and to extend Gertrude Stein, there is no 'out there out there'.

We would conclude here that if there is going to be room for some ghostly space beyond space into which we project the Foci of religion, that space is best described as Emptiness. This bypasses concepts both of Reality and of Process.

Such a noumenon does not do much, however, towards the thesis that all the representations of the Divine point to the same Real. It leaves that thesis on one side. If you want to hold, after all, that all gods are the same (to speak roughly), then that is your Focus. It is in no way guaranteed by the concept of a space beyond. Emptiness can neither guarantee sameness nor difference, for the simple reason that it is neither singular nor plural. If you want to align yourself with *smārtā* thought in India, with Aldous Huxley, with Swami Vivekananda or with John Hick, then you have to devise a phenomenal representation of the Divine which affirms this. This is not at all a bad thing to do, and I almost believe it myself (though I draw back because of *nirvāṇa*), nor do I wish here to be critical of that thesis. It has great plausibility, though probably for epistemological rather than ontological reasons. Its plausibility stems from the fact that you cannot deduce the falsity of one tradition or the non-existence of one Focus simply from the standpoint of another tradition or Focus. On the other hand, the criteria of truth as between religions are soft, to put it no more strongly. Let us put it in a sharper form. Either traditions are hermetically sealed from one another, in which case none can judge any other, and all are relative; or we can rise above

traditions as human beings and excogitate criteria for judging different traditions. But, in the latter case, there can be no doubt that the criteria or tests are soft ones. We might judge traditions by fruits, but that is a pretty squashy criterion. Or by religious experience: but here too we have no sharpness. Or by metaphysics but, notoriously, metaphysical judgements differ and allegedly logical arguments move in different directions. And so either we can make no judgements or, if we can, they are soft ones. Now in the light of these epistemological observations, which amount to saying that no point of view or worldview can be proved, it is not implausible to fuse the great traditions together and to see them as so many fingers pointing at the same moon. But even this thesis cannot be proved, and we must have some sympathy for those who, frightened by softness, involve themselves in particularist backlashes. But we cannot preempt discussion by our philosophical apparatus. If we affirm a single Real we have already taken a step inside the cosmos: we have stepped into the Perennial Philosophy thesis. This may well be the truth.

Another thought, however, is a rather differing one, namely the notion that all Foci point to Emptiness, which implies nothing. It is true that this would seem to favour the Focus of that form of Mahāyāna which argues for Emptiness. This is not so: for in an important way the question of the Focus remains. If it is meant to be real Emptiness – that is to say, a kind of conscious blankness as manifested in the higher states of meditation and in the philosophy of Emptiness – then it has no more nor less connection with the transcendental Emptiness than does any other Focus. If the Beyond is, so to say, a blank, then it has no connections at all with anything, however minimally, characterised as lying on the hither side. A blank noumenon represents no phenomenon and is just there, in effect, as a placeholder.

All this, of course, bypasses the argument that we are and should be experiencing a Copernican revolution. It seems less epicyclical to postulate a Real to which all religions point than to wrestle with problems of Christian or Buddhist interpretations of all other religious traditions. I am not here wishing to confront this argument directly. But there is another way of looking at traditions.

This is to hold that the differing traditions point at a placeholder. That is, we can talk of the ultimate as lying beyond them, but that placeholder is a space for alternatives, not the point at which differing paths meet (though it might *par accidens* be that). In other words, the differing religions may overlap somewhat but really have differ-

ing, and no doubt complementary, messages. We do not need to suppose that God is really *nirvāna* or that the Tao is *brahman*. Such equations can, of course, be argued for and could be true. But the Focus of Theravāda Buddhism remains very remarkably different from that of the Hebrew Bible. It is not so easy to see them both pointing to the same Real: and even if they do, many of the divergences stay in place. Maybe it is better to think of the various religions as overlapping, and yet being different, and often complementary. Complementarity is probably a better model than that of unity. In the long run, perhaps, not too much difference is generated by the alternative models. The desirable effect of the idea of unity is that different traditions should honour one another and cooperate. On the other hand, the desirable effect of the complementarity model is that differing traditions should not merely honour one another but also provide friendly criticism and advice. Complementary religions can instruct one another and render critiques in a positive and caring manner. So it may turn out that the fruits of the models will resemble one another quite a lot.

Complementarity suggests the possibility, but by no means the certainty, of convergence. Since nothing about world-views and value systems can ever be sure, there can be no way of answering the question as to whether there will be a single world religion or ideology. I doubt it, for several reasons. First, every merger produces a backlash, and every friendship an enmity. So where two religions begin to merge, there are backlashes in both traditions, reacting against what can be seen as a weakening of each tradition. Second, the rather radical distinctions between some theistic traditions and non-theistic faiths, notably Theravāda Buddhism, seems to be unbridgeable. Thus, Theravāda Buddhism believes essentially in no Creator, while Islam and Christianity have faith in a Creator. The Theravāda believes in rebirth or reincarnation; most of Christianity and Judaism do not. And so on. Third, the progress of science and human creativity involves diversity. The critical mind is vital. The human race therefore has a vested interest in pluralism, and so world-views should be somewhat encouraged to differ (no doubt in a friendly way: courtesy is often the oil which lubricates mutual criticism).

Paradoxically, however, there is a feature of Hick's Kantianism which may point in the opposite direction and reinforce his general position. In invoking the categorical structure of the human mind as having input into knowledge as the mind filters the phenomena, he

is, in the case of religions, postulating something much weaker than the *a priori*. After all, it is the traditions which mould the minds which experience the Absolute. In the quotation I cited above he obviously thinks of contingent traditions, such as the Theravāda or Advaita Vedānta, as providing the structures which people bring to their meditation. It is because of them that mysticism appears different. I am, of course, highly sympathetic with this account ('of course', because the major conflicts between differing writers on mysticism concern, after all, the question of how many types there are – few go to the extreme of supposing that there are radically different and separately contextualised mysticisms wherever you look – in short radically different forms to the same number as individuals engaged in mystical practices. Such extreme particularism becomes self-defeating since it precludes cross-cultural studies and cross-cultural uses of language).

Now the differing traditions, while they soak into the minds and hearts and social structures of the people and realms over which they hold sway, are contingent. A Chinese does not have to remain Chinese. It is true that once we have been raised in one tradition we may be so heavily influenced by it that we can never fight our way out of it. But it is not an iron paper bag: we can in fact in some degree struggle out of our cultures. Many people come to have two or more cultural milieus. So even if I may think like a Britisher and a Scot in particular, this does not prevent me thinking somewhat like an American, since I have lived much of my life in the United States. I have also been much influenced by the fact that I have an Italian wife, and have been involved a lot in Sri Lankan and Indian cultures. So I am now a bit of a cultural mishmash. I regard that as a good thing, as it happens. But it is clear that the filters through which I experience the world have altered. So it is not as if I possess a fixed *a priori*. Now as traditions influence one another so they may come to converge and generate a more unified view of the ultimate. In other words, because the concepts which different folk bring to bear in interpreting their experience are contingent or accidental they can influence one another. In this way the ground may be prepared for a Perennial Philosophy. It could be, despite the arguments which I used above in the opposite direction, that the developing world civilisation will tend to generate a Perennial Philosophy which is not unlike Hick's. Though this unity might breed boring agreement, it would not in itself be at all disagreeable, for the main trouble in the past has been senseless hostilities between differing traditions.

There might, of course, be aspects of the traditions whose shape is not contingent. For instance, the divergence between the mystical path, culminating in the non-dual experience which abolishes the duality between subject and object, and the numinous encounter with the Other, is something entrenched in religions. There are, in addition, other major forms of religious experience, such as the panenhenic. These three begin to account for Theravāda Buddhism (which emphasises the mystical strand), prophetic Judaism (emphasising the numinous) and early Taoism (emphasising the panenhenic) – and so forth. This is admittedly a crude way of characterising differences, but is not without truth. We could look to deeper structures of religion than the brute particularity of the traditions. So there could be a way of looking at religious patterns which underlies traditionalism. Even so, what we would be revealing by such a phenomenological analysis is patterns of religiosity, and it is a further step to try to establish that these are *a priori*. In brief, the notion advanced by John Hick, quite correctly, that experience is affected and channelled by traditional expectations and background differs from the classical Kantian view. It harbours contingency of traditions. As critical beings we can surely suppose that traditions are neither immutable nor unchallengeable. There is possibly what may be called a 'traditionalist positivism' in his position. This would not be unnatural, since all of us in the field of the study of religion tend to be emerging from a period of (Christian) theological excessivism and so want to accentuate what is positive in 'other' faiths. But even so we should not forget the critical mode. From the standpoint of criticism, the positivist mode of emphasising the actual traditions in filtering experience needs to be sceptically considered. In brief, we do not need to accept any one traditional view of the ultimate. And this already means that our schematism is not truly Kantianism. We might dub it 'contingent Kantianism'. This is, of course, different from the classical notion that certain categories are built into our minds and we filter phenomena through such categories. In short, the way we filter religious experience and so on is culturally contingent.

All this means that we are a long way from Kant. Does this matter? In one way it does not. He was a great philosopher, but he is long dead. Who do these dead men think they are? The upshot is that we cannot pretend that there is anything necessary in the way we interpret religious experience. Given such a critical attitude to religious experience, then we are embarked on a much more broadly-

based set of criticisms of religious traditions. We are now in a different age, and we have started to live without authority. 'We' are, of course, those who live in a relatively open society, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, India, and Germany. In the open society we, as individuals, make our choices, as individuals.

It seems inevitable to conclude that we are entering upon an age of eclecticism. This is increasingly true of the democracies of America and Europe, not to mention Australasia and even India. I say 'even India' to exhibit the fact that that great democracy is subject to some of the same forces that operate elsewhere. In short, individualism is spreading. Of course, it encourages individuals to make significant choices in religion (as elsewhere). It is not unnatural that this situation should breed not just individualism, but eclecticism too. This increases the pluralism of modern societies. But so what? How does all this affect the argument about Hick?

It affects it because we can no longer make any assumptions about the stability of traditions. With a certain strength in the continuity of older religions we might suppose that there is less contingency in the way we approach experiences. That is, we might think somehow that there are deep patterns underlying the way we come to see our absolute. But individualism amplifies the contingency of traditions. Eclecticism fragments and dissolves rigid traditions from the ages which we look back to. As traditions crumble, we are more prone to pick and choose. Even where a tradition still retains its appeal, its pattern can be changed and its rigidities can be sapped. Thus, while about 50 per cent or a little under of North Italians are Catholic in behaviour, there is about the lowest birthrate in the world. The people are relatively loyal to the tradition, but they thumb their noses at papal teaching about birth control. They are vigorously displaying an eclectic attitude. Now if all this is so – and if this kind of shift of loyalty be realistic – then it follows that holistic traditions are not as vital as we once may have thought. And all this saps the foundations of what we have taken to be traditions. Those traditions are continuously weakened. Whether this be a good or a bad thing is a question I leave on one side. But we are undoubtedly witnessing great changes in the West concerning world-views. We do not need to suppose that they are much more, in democratic societies, than lobbies and associations, and they are sustained by the loyalty of those who support the activities of church leadership.

In brief, the notion that there are deep categories underlying the church and *Saṅgha*, etc., traditions which help to inform and shape

our experience, is one which needs to be questioned. Traditions crumble and soften, and we are seeing it happen in front of our eyes as we swivel them across the world. That gaze, sweeping across cultural frontiers, takes in changes across the spiritual horizon. There are no longer genuine fixed points and horizons. Nor are there Crosses and Bodhi Trees and sacred shrines we can easily cling to, as if there were sure means of salvation in today's world or even in yesterday's world, seeing that our world-views are so diverse and uncertain.

So what are we to conclude from all the foregoing argument? First, it may not be necessary to postulate a single Real as though there is a single point towards which the various Foci of the world's religions are supposed to point. As we have argued, there are problems about the noumenal. There is not a single Beyond, nor yet a plural Beyond, for number does not apply outside space-time. This makes the model of Buddhist Emptiness attractive. But it does not mean that Emptiness becomes our absolute. Second, we have noted that the *via negativa* typically arises in connection with the mystical path. Such negative language does not mean that we somehow through it reach beyond experience. Rather it is that minimalist description of experience is registered. The mystic's experience, even if it may be non-dual, that is with no subject-object duality, is still phenomenal. Third, we do not at all resolve the problem of the diversity of Foci by postulating a single Real. One cannot establish the identity of Focus A and Focus B on the basis of their both referring to a single Real: rather the claim that they both refer to the same Real is another way of affirming the identity, which has to be argued on other grounds.

The plausibility of the affirmation of a single Real is high in general, but problematic in particular. For instance, the fact that the Theravāda does not have a substantive Absolute is a stumbling-block in the theory of transcendental unity; but yet the idea is attractive to those who have generous views about other traditions.

There is another way of affirming unity, however, which may not have the problems associated with the notion of a single Real. This is the eschatological way. That is, we notice that differing traditions have evolved quite a lot over time. However much a latter-day liberal Protestant may wish to think that his or her world-view is firmly rooted in that of the New Testament, it is plain that considerable changes have occurred between then and now. For one

thing, the major features of our world were absent from the New Testament era. Let me list a few: the industrial revolution and its aftermath; capitalism; modern democracy; birth control; modern psychology and psychotherapy; the global world-order; the abolition of slavery; the feminist revolution; and electronic systems of communication. All these features of our life have large and subtle effects upon faith. Given, then, that of necessity traditions have changed, why should they not continue to be transformed? It is conceivable, therefore, that the great traditions, today in contradiction, may evolve patterns which converge. And so while a single Real here and now may not be easy to establish, we might look towards a future Real. The Empty is also open, as we have remarked earlier.

An advantage of this future convergence theory is that it lets us regard the present traditions as being complementary to one another. They can teach each other lessons. Thus a Christian might wish to hold that the Spirit works in all cultures, and the rivalry of religions is designed by the Divine to keep them honest so far as possible. Universal agreement often breeds corruption, since it certainly engenders complacency. This theory of the complementary roles of religions makes it important, by the way, for education to include learning about the various important spiritual cultures of the world, since they can help to correct one another and at the same time enrich one another. At the same time the theory suggests that we should all take a self-critical stance towards our own traditions. Looking backward in a rigid manner and failing to recognise the transformation of the past are undesirable attitudes. Still, the fluidity of our situation in world society, with its many challenges to traditions, is bound to multiply backlashes against the open and irenic outlooks I am here advocating, and which follow too from John Hick's position. So we would be very foolish to expect agreement. Still, a world-view of world-views which looks to a future convergence will probably become more and more influential as the globe reflects upon its close texture, made dense by instantaneous communications and rapid travel.

Notes

1. John Hick, 'Religious Pluralism' in Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), Vol. 12, pp. 332–3.
2. Nancy McCagney, *Nagarjuna Then and Now* (Santa Barbara: University of California doctoral dissertation, 1991).
3. Peter F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959).

Models for Understanding the Relations between Religions

In considering the possibilities of differing models of the relation between the various major religious traditions, we had better ask: From what point of view are we doing the modeling? Are we thinking to be neutral somehow? Or are we standing within a tradition? Or, more nebulously, are we occupying a certain religious position, though not precisely identifying with one tradition? Moreover, are there models which work with some pair or group of religions but do not work with others? And again, are there models which function across religions, but only in relation to sub-traditions within them?

Let me begin with a cursory inspection of a few main positions. To start with, Vivekananda and Neo-Advaita (a position which has been so influential among the modern Hindu elite). This views all religions as so many diverse paths towards the one Reality, operating at differing levels of sophistication. It has a Hindu flavor, this position, because of the claim that Hinduism always sensed that there were many diverse paths to the one goal and many different names of God. If it has an advantage over other religious traditions, it lies in the antiquity of its perception of the ultimate unity of religions and its many historical expressions of such a view.

There is a resemblance between Neo-Advaita and John Hick's conclusions,¹ and I shall come to the latter later. It contains of course at least two problems. Not all religions will agree about the Neo-Advaita characterization of the ultimate truth. Many theists will object, especially if they spring from appeals to exclusive revelation. In particular, the ultimate reality is presented in a substantialist way in Neo-Advaita: this does not seem to square with Theravādin *nirvāṇa* or with Mahāyāna *śūnyatā* (though the latter sometimes functions a bit like a ghost-substance). The second problem is an extension of this last observation. Religions seems to be linked together not by an essentialist definition but rather by family resemblance. Attempts have been made to postulate for instance a core religious experience: for instance the numinous experience,² or the mystical experience³ (or inner ineffable contemplative state). It is a matter of value judgment as to

which is more crucial⁴: but certainly neither is all-pervasive of religions. It is hard to find the numinous experience in early Buddhism, where Jeremiahs and Isaiahs, Moseses or Pauls are hard to come by. And yogic contemplation is a million miles away from traditional Scottish Calvinism or the modern Muslim Brotherhood. Shamanistic experience, again, is very widespread but is scarcely universal. So we could go on with other key players such as worship, sacrifice, etc.

This family-resemblance character of world religions is even more pronounced if we are led by it gently down the path of including secular worldviews, such as Chinese Marxism, in the same category.⁵ I believe there is a strong argument for doing this, from various points of view, but I shall not insist on taking that path in this essay.

We may note, by the way, that perennialists such as Aldous Huxley, have a position like that of Vivekananda.⁶ In effect, though, they are making mysticism the core feature of religion and so appeal to Sufi, Christian-mystical, yogic and other texts in support of their position. Kabbalah becomes central to Judaism, and so on. Again we know that there are many sub-traditions which would reject such an identification of mysticism with the highest aspect of their religious tradition. Many forms of Protestantism for instance have little or nothing to do with Eckhart or even Boehme. In short, what perennialists are doing is occupying a particular religious position with its attendant value-judgments and presenting that as the heart of the religions. It is not at all an unworthy position, but it is essentially open to challenge. I think a similar structure applies to Rudolf Otto's definition of religion in terms of the numinous.⁷ His attempt to make this phenomenological pattern apply to mystical experience is, to put it mildly, rather feeble. In short there is an implicit ordering of values of differing kinds of religious experience in his very proposal.

Let us now turn to another possible model, but not without noting that we shall be coming back to a kind of perennialism, in the shape of John Hick's model inasmuch as it espouses a version of the Kantian distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal.

Another model is simply exclusivist: namely my tradition contains more of the truth, and all others less. This can be thought of as a relatively kindly doctrine: thus J. N. Farquhar's idea of the Christian faith as being the crown of Hinduism is a benign version.⁸ A good deal less benign is the notion that we have the revelation and all others are benighted. This is and has been the most typical stance of all worldviews. It raises, of course, issues about criteria. What singles out one revelation as being the highest, or only, truth? But I do not want to get directly into issues about criteria, though my conclusions will say something about them.

One variant of this is the Barthian⁹ notion that all religions are human responses and projections. The only difference between Christianity and other traditions, according to Kraemer, in his influential *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (1938), is that it stands and has stood continuously under the influence and judgment of Christ. We can neglect 'judgment' here, for obvious reasons: it is the question of influence that becomes important. Christ here is of course conceived as a transcendental power which somehow impinges on the world. It is obvious, is it not, that any other tradition can play the same game (and sometimes does), by postulating some other power such as *dharma* or *śūnyatā* as being transcendental or on a differing plane of truth from mundane truth including the manifestations of religion. The ploy leaves us essentially in the same position as that pertaining to the straight appeal to revelation.

Now of course we cannot exclude that a person or tradition might have good reasons for favoring their worldview and commanding their own revelation. Nevertheless, it does not take much reflection to see that while in theory it might be possible to prove some point given the truth of a given revelation and so it might be possible to prove or clinch a given worldview given the truth of its supporting revelation, it is not possible to prove a revelation itself in the face of alternatives. Perhaps the Prophet was a genius whose unconscious excogitated the Qur'ān. Maybe the Veda is just a collection put together by an arrogance of Brahmins. Even miracles certify nothing. This does not prevent proponents from defending the various bodies of scripture: the awesome resonances of the Qur'ān betoken a divine origin: the splendid insights of the Upaniṣads give them an everlasting significance. And so on. But such appeals are scarcely *clinching*. So though the exclusivist model is a possibility, it ought realistically to admit the softness of the application of any criteria of truth.

Another position could be a non-veridical one. Each tradition defines a way of life. Each tradition can therefore offer something to human beings, but while a person may find a tradition pragmatically fruitful in her life, it will sit among its rivals as an equal. One may call this the 'Pragmatic Relativist' model. We can think of various justifications for it: For instance, the various cultural traditions of humanity all contain richnesses which we should preserve for the sake of world civilization. Still, problems would crop up. What if moral imperatives conflict? Are not some moral imperatives universal? And why not simply put bits and pieces of differing traditions together if the fancy takes you? The latter by the way is beginning to happen on a wide scale in modern societies, especially in America – wherever individualism reigns. We may not know authority is decaying, to

the point where acceptance of a given authority becomes a matter of faith and so a matter for the individual.

Although people who hold that only from within a tradition can you hope to understand it and therefore judge its truth may not think of themselves as relativists, it seems to be a concomitant of the position.¹⁰ Various hermetically distinct traditions, apparently saying different things, could neither compete nor not compete. They might turn out all to be true: but if so truth no longer is linked to formulae (or rightness to practice). The justification for belonging would turn out at best to be pragmatic. One might dub this position 'Internalist Relativism' or perhaps 'Internalist Nihilism'. Such nihilism has not been absent from the Wittgensteinian tradition.

Another somewhat different position from the perennialist one is what may be called 'Dialogical Convergentism'.¹¹ That is, the position that each religion in dialogue with its neighbors and a true reciprocity might in the future come towards agreement in spiritual matters. This position does not imply that all religions have the same truth, but in the course of world civilization might develop it. It is perhaps optimistic from the following point of view: It is notable that with convergences come backlash. Thus within a religion and its sub-traditions, ecumenism encourages convergence, but such convergence in turn spurs backlashes from traditionalists. Together with the emergence of new religions arising from the meeting of traditions and the fluidity of society with its attendant anguishes, all this dictates a multiplication of sub-traditions and traditions just when the major traditions may be simplifying themselves through the aforementioned convergence. It may be over-optimistic then to expect an ultimate convergence through constructive dialogue. I am assuming in the latter the creation of new forms of truth lying well beyond present formulations which might bring about harmony between the traditions. All religions do not point to the same truth but might by changing come to agree on the same truth, of which the traditions become bearers of localized variations.

Does the use of the noumenal-phenomenal distinction make a difference here? Let me first comment on problems associated with it which have become well known since the time of Immanuel Kant. The first is that Kant talks of the noumenal as 'things-in-themselves'. Hick's model rather uses the singular, the Real. Now strictly speaking the noumenal should neither be singular nor plural. Numbers apply within the space-time world. If one were to be preferred over the other it would perhaps be the singular, though it might be better to think of the noumenal as a mass rather than a thing. Indeed other possibilities begin to emerge: Why not think of the noumenal as energy-in-itself rather than as the Real? Again, there is something not, I

think, discussed by Kant or his successors, which has to do, so to say, with the frontier between the noumenal and the phenomenal. Is it shifting? What I have in mind is this: We might think of nature as being confronted by science. Whatever conceptual apparatus and experimentation we bring to bear, there is always the sense of the noumenal as being an X onto which we project our ideas and empirical knowledge. We in modern times have gone far beyond perception in exploring our environment, and with clever theories and sophisticated apparatus have knowledge of much that lies beyond the senses. We have a notion from inside the circle of light which is our knowledge that its frontiers are being continually pushed back. However, there is a problem arising from this sense of the noumenal: it is the unseen stuff of our cosmos. But religions are often transcosmic, that is concerned with a transcendent being or state which lies beyond the realm of this cosmos. So they lie beyond, so to speak, the cosmic noumenal as well as the phenomenal cosmos. *Nirvāna*, God, *Brahman* and so forth lie beyond the universe: and even where there is identification with the cosmic as perhaps in the concept of the Tao, the Tao also lies beyond, as I transcend my body, though identified with it. So if we are to cluster religions together which all point to the Transcendent then we need two levels of noumena: the one to do with the substratum, so to speak of this cosmos and the other to deal with the unknowable side of God (etc.).

But from this perspective also the upper noumenal has no number, like its lower counterpart. It has to be utterly indeterminate. This is where using the locution 'the Real' represents a hostage to fortune. So in fact the use of the Kantian language indicates a possible bifurcation into two models. One is what may be called neo-perennialist. The other is more diffuse, since what the various phenomenal manifestations or presentations of the ultimate are of is not a putative single entity but something which is indeterminate. To say that the differing manifestations of religion revolve round such an Indeterminate represents I think a differing model. Maybe the divergence is not great, but it is still there, subtly. The non-Realist position affirms a noumenal Transcendent, but this is not specified either as a kind of substance or not. It is parallel to the notion of a this-cosmic noumenal described as Energy or Process rather than 'things-in-themselves'. It is as if there is a kind of transcendent Spiritual Realm, which then becomes manifested in human consciousness as God, *nirvāna*, *Brahman* and so forth.

We might note, by the way, a vital paradox which I have noted elsewhere in discussing the noumenal Focus lying 'beyond' the Foci of phenomenological encounter and that is that since this Focus is by definition beyond manifestation, it can have no empirical effects upon the cosmos or upon us.¹² Kant had the same problem: could the things-in-themselves be

thought of as giving rise to the phenomena? On the theory which he held, where concepts like causation had to be applied to and within the realm of phenomena, obviously not. And so what good does their postulation do? Well, by the same token the noumenal Focus does not strictly impinge upon the phenomenal Foci. If so, then (to put the matter in simpler theistic terms) while we feel called on by the very activity of worship, for instance, to affirm the existence of God, there is a sense in which it does not matter whether she exists or not. This is the little paradox. It might appeal to the late J. N. Findlay,¹³ in thinking that a non-existent Focus is the only one worth worshipping. But let us return to the contemplation of varying models. Let us label the two varieties I have distinguished, 'Noumenal Realism' and 'Noumenal Indeterminism' respectively.

There is a variation further on the question of the positive character of divergent religious manifestations. Personally, I consider that when you take all the sub-traditions into account, there are some very unfortunate features of religions as well as many positive ones. It is not enough for anyone to say that all religious traditions are equally good, unless miraculously their differing vices balance out. Now it is hard to know where one would stand in making a moral judgment. Perhaps up to a point it does not matter where you take your stand, provided that you are open to criticism and learning from others. In other words an open Christian, influenced by the model of heavenly Love, and the Buddhist, moved by the example of self-sacrificing compassion, may have differing value-systems, and yet if they are open to one another they can form their own rational and sensitive judgments increasingly under each other's influence and friendly criticism.

Such openness ought to be a consequence of healthy modernism, that is the realization that faith is challenged by many items in our modern knowledge – challenged by the way but not overthrown – and among these is the modern empathetic and informed study of religion and religions. The very existence of divergent revelations ought to soften people's attitudes to one another's faiths. It does not of course always do so, partly because challenges to one's tradition are sometimes a cause of surface bristling: burying the challenge in the subconscious and on the surface of life reaffirming in harsh terms the glorious and inviolate truth of one's own tradition. But as rational beings we need a softer sense of the criteria of truth and rightness and of their application, as John Hick among others has well argued.

If then a person, even judging from within her own tradition, has an open attitude towards others, then she might serve as a friendly critic to other traditions and accept the validity or at least appropriateness of friendly criticism from others. Or again, a person of a given tradition might accept criticism from outside and in trying to reform his or her own tradition take

part in a continuing moral-legal dialogue with others. The same could apply to doctrines and narratives as well as to ethics: after all, many Christians have changed their attitudes to some aspects of New Testament narratives in the light of the Holocaust and the grisly realization of the way in which a kind of anti-Judaism is built into even the earliest Christian traditions. Moreover, with openness it would be possible to borrow ideas and practices: as Christians have done in relation to yoga and Zen methods, Buddhists in relation to social work (e.g. the Young Men's Buddhist Association, etc.), Hindus in absorbing elements of Western critical philosophy and scholarship, and so on. I for instance sometimes describe myself as a Buddhist Episcopalian, because of certain influences upon my Christianity: and in a recent book a colleague Steven Konstantine and I have fused Asian thought and Western theology into a new way of presenting the Christian faith.¹⁴ And so, in short, it is possible for the traditions to live together under the aegis of either Noumenal Realism or of Noumenal Indeterminism as being complementary to one another. This is what I call the Thesis of Complementarity. It gives a new twist to unitive hypotheses.

Such a model may of course – indeed it would have to – be absorbed into the theologies of traditions. Not all traditions or sub-traditions would necessarily be at all happy with it. If I absorb it into my tradition it is because I view it as a corollary of liberalism in religion, and I have already taken that on board. It is of course likely to provoke some outrage and backlash. But I personally hold that it makes a lot of sense. Let me put the point in theistic terms: God has created many religions so that they can keep each other honest! By mutual criticism and hopefully friendly rivalry they can help to prevent the myopias and corruptions which seem everywhere the concomitants of human worldviews and in particular religious ones. In Hindu terms it is as if the Lord is the inner controller or *antaryāmin* in the diverse traditions, and in Christian terms it is as if the Spirit works in all cultures. It seems logical that she should. If the human condition leads to struggles between traditions this may just be part of the creative dialectic of history.

I mentioned just now that a sub-tradition may take on board liberalism. This is shorthand for saying that there is a set of 'secular' values, largely stemming from the Enlightenment, and constituting the core of that world-view which may be called liberal or scientific humanism, which become synthesized with a religious tradition, such as Christianity. It should not be surprising: some Protestant values contributed to the Enlightenment vision of the world. Of course, humanism is sometimes presented as being atheistic: and atheism cannot blend easily with theism, despite occasional heroic efforts. Still, there can be a considerable overlap between such a secular worldview and religious one. I think it is necessary for religions to update

themselves in terms of contemporary knowledge. For one thing, to stay the same they need to adapt. If at a given time everyone thinks that the sun goes round the earth, then the meaning of that claim becomes quite different after Copernicus and Newton. To get frozen into old forms of thought or behaviour is to change, by (in a narrow sense) not changing. In short, not changing is a form of change. Now this implies that differing constructions have to be created in diverse times. In modern times liberal Christianity has a chance of being the truest to earlier formulations, precisely because it has changed commensurately with the changes of the times.

The way in which religious sub-traditions meld with secular ideologies will remind us that the problem of the truth of worldviews is wider than that of the truth of religions. Roughly we are here treating of the range of religious worldviews as spanning the transcendental sierra: religious worldviews are those which postulate, dimly or clearly, a transcendent being or state (whether God or *nirvāṇa*). Human aspirations are measured against the Transcendent. But these religions worldviews do not of course exhaust the whole range of worldviews: others such as liberal humanism and Marxism lie beyond them. Our models apply to religions but not to all worldviews. (It could be that secular worldviews might need the conception of the noumenal, but at the cosmic rather than the transcosmic levels: though in fact there are plenty of humanists who do not feel the need to adopt a Kantian framework).

It is worth noting, however, that the epistemological status of all worldviews is similar in principle. That is, just as there can be no proof, without question-begging, of any one religious or spiritual worldview over against others (as we have already noted), so systems such as humanism and Marxism cannot be proved. For humanism, for instance, would claim that there is nothing transcendent. This calls into question a lot of human testimony of course. But humanists could of course be right, and they have some reasons on their side – for instance, the variation of theologies and philosophies among the world's many religions is disturbing and calls into question the simpler backings of claims about the Transcendent. But to prove that there is no Transcendent is a different matter. Can one climb out of the cosmos to have a look and check that there is nothing outside it? Of course, the notion is absurd. Similarly with the complexities of Marxist analysis. Besides, worldviews are flexible creatures, adapting and changing. Cut off one leg and another grows somewhere else. Many of the assumptions of medieval Catholicism have disappeared and the glories of Tridentine faith have transmogrified since Vatican II. The changeability of religious and other worldviews gives them a lot of staying power. If they wither, it is by a rather slow process of fading. They no longer have the grip

on the imagination that they used to. But all this does not imply that there are not reasons and grounds of faith – in experience, in reasoning, in the calls of conscience and so forth. So one may characterize a worldview as itself being intrinsically unprovable, unclinchable. There can be no ‘objective’ or public proof or certainty. The consequence of this obvious conclusion is not, however, relativism, since there can be (soft) grounds for holding one position rather than another. I call this general view Soft Non-Relativism. It seems to have consequences which rare consonant with one of the above models, namely Noumenal Realism or Noumenal Indeterminism. For if one reflects that one’s own faith, however fervently held, is only softly supported, then this opens up the possibility that the other traditions might be just as right, or that one of them might turn out to be ‘the’ truth. Moreover, Soft Non-Relativism chimes in well with the Complementarity Thesis.

It may be objected that the models are too nice. Do they not block out thoroughgoing commitment to one’s tradition? Do they not sap the will to convert others? Are they not inimical to certitude in faith? I do not think so, for a variety of reasons. One can, first, be sure about something for which one does not have public proof. I am highly committed to a particular political position, but I know that I could not prove this position, in the nature of the case. One can be committed with deepest love to one’s spouse after let us say a month of marriage, without having proof that that commitment will turn out in the long run to be justified (what if after twenty years she slides away?). So a kind of deep commitment is very feasible despite lack of proof, in part because commitment stretches into an unknowable future (unknowable, that is, until it arrives). Second, it is in the nature of most religious experience to be private: appeal to it counts for something in public, but not all that much. We can be thoroughly persuaded of God’s presence, therefore, without being able to demonstrate it publicly. Third, does all this imply that you do not wish to persuade or convert others? Not at all: in entering into dialogue with folk of other traditions you may wish to display the glories of your own tradition, and to display them is on the path towards trying to convert.

Soft Non-Relativism implies, however, that we can utterly exclude no possibilities. While the drift of my argument has been rather averse to hard-line attitudes, such as fundamentalist-type exclusivism, and even to the politer exclusivism of such as Karl Barth, it is not on the basis of Soft Non-Relativism possible to think that fundamentalism of one sort or another is absolutely disproved. So all models have to stay on the field of play. But some may seem to many of us to be rather enfeebled. Certainly, there is plausibility in combining Noumenal Realism or Indeterminism with Soft

Non-Relativism and the Complementarity Thesis. That at any rate is my position, and I am strengthened in feeling its grip by the reflection that as we speed towards the creation of a genuinely global civilization pluralism becomes an imperative in trying to sort out how we all live together, mingling religions, cultures, languages. Pragmatically, as well as rationally, there is much to commend this kindly association of attitudes. John Hick is especially to be commended in opening up the whole debate about religions in new ways.

Notes

1. John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1989), esp. chap. 14.
2. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: OUP, 1936).
3. W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York: Humanities, 1960).
4. See my *Reasons and Faiths* (London: Routledge, 1958), esp. chap. 5.
5. N. Smart, *Worldviews* (New York: Scribner, 1983).
6. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Ayer, 1945).
7. See my *Concept and Empathy*, ed. Don Wiebe (New York: NYU Press, 1986), chap. 12.
8. J. N. Farquhar, *the Crown of Hinduism* (New York: OUP, 1920).
9. Or really Brunnerian: see H. Kraemer *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (Tambaram, 1938).
10. For example D. Z. Phillips, *The Concept of Prayer* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).
11. A view reminiscent of R. C. Zaehner in his *Concordant Discord* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).
12. See my *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), chap. 2.
13. Notably in his 'Can God's Existence be Disproved?' *Mind* N. S. vol. 57, (1948) 176–83.
14. *Christian Systematic Theology in World Context* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1991).

Pluralism

The term “pluralism” is used in at least three senses. One use expresses the observation that there is an actual plurality of religious and other beliefs, practices, and so on in the world. For instance, one might speak of the “pluralism of Los Angeles,” referring to the fact that many differing belief systems, customs, and so forth are to be found in Los Angeles. The factual pluralism or plural nature of world cultures is of course important, and this pluralism helps therefore to stimulate reflection on the truth of the Christian (or any other) faith. We could better call this pluralism “diversity.”

The second meaning of the term is political: A pluralistic political system allows within it the free exercise of diverse religious practices and beliefs, as well as diverse political stances. A pluralistic society is one that does not conceive itself as enforcing a single ideology or faith. This sense of pluralism is equivalent to the word “secular” in one of its two main meanings. A secular state or a secular university is one that in theory separates religion from the state or university, and so it does not entrench some established faith or commitment. The other, quite different, meaning of “secular” is equivalent to “antireligious.” Thus while Albania in the fifty years since the beginning of World War II has been a secular or antireligious state under Marxist rule, India since independence has been a secular or pluralistic state. India is highly religious and Albania (officially at least) highly antireligious. It is therefore easier to substitute the term “pluralistic” for the relevant use of “secular” and to reserve “secular” to mean antireligious, or at least nonreligious.

The third meaning of “pluralistic” is the most important. It refers to a theory of religions or, more broadly, world views, including secular world views. It is the theory, principally, that all religions ultimately point to the same truth. Naturally, it is affected both by religious diversity and by political pluralism. Let us then briefly note some historical developments both as to diversity and as to political pluralism or toleration.

Diversity was a feature of the milieu of early Christianity up to the age of Constantine (late 280s–337). With the eventual dominance of the church, diversity was discouraged, although it flourished in early medieval Spain with the symbiosis of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. But the main period of Western Christian history was relatively monocultural, so that even in modern times Christian theology has tended, like philosophy, to be taught in a more or less exclusively Western way. Even the experience of other cultures and religions during the age of discovery was filtered through the lens of empire and colonialism, while the colossal achievements of Western culture—through the Enlightenment, the formation of capitalism, the industrial revolution, and the alarming but satisfying advances of modern science—gave the West a sense of superiority that made it easy to discount or underestimate the achievements of

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other religions and cultures. But during the thirty years from 1960 to 1990, something of a sea change in these attitudes came about, for three reasons: (1) the growth of indigenous Western interest in Eastern religions, especially Buddhism, Hinduism, and Chinese modes of thought and practice; (2) the resurgence of Islam, which could no longer be ignored politically, especially in the wake of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990; (3) the magnificent success of Japanese economics, followed by that of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—all of which gave new weight to Far Eastern cultures and religions. And so a recognition of diversity stimulated Christian writings on other cultures and reinforced the impetus to dialogue. Accompanying these changes, but a less observed factor in the perception of diversity, was the growing shift of the center of gravity in Christianity southward—with the relatively greater importance demographically of Christians in Latin America, black Africa, and parts of Asia and the South Pacific.

The perception of diversity has had important effects on Christian attitudes to other religions, but also noteworthy are some changes in regard to pluralism in the sense of the separation of church (religious institutions) and state (governmental systems). In this sense of pluralism, there have been vital shifts, due to migration and other factors. The United States' and Indian constitutions legislate a pluralistic attitude, and other northern nations have moved in the same direction because of the increased presence of Muslims and other traditionally absent populations in previously Christian-dominated countries. Moreover, the political events of 1989 in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have opened up a new lot of countries with a pluralistic ethos (though the Catholic church has tried to reexert dominance in Poland).

The modern realization of diversity has led to an increased Christian interest in theologies and practices that incorporate elements from other religious traditions. These are examined below. Historically, however, the churches have tended to suppress diversity, both during the hegemony of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches up to the Reformation, and to some degree after the Reformation, when the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* ("of whom the rule, of that person the religion") came to be widely applied. Contributing to the erosion of such establishmentarianism were: (1) the emergence of the Radical Reformation, including the Anabaptists and others, which in arguing for adult baptism made faith a matter of personal response rather than governmental decree; (2) the growth of Enlightenment thinking in the second half of the eighteenth century, which called into question traditional beliefs and authoritarian practices; (3) the American Revolution with its consequence—a separation of church and state, stimulated by Enlightenment thinking and a history of settlement by non-conformists and Radical Reformers from Europe (Baptists in Rhode Island, the Pilgrim ancestors, the Society of Friends in Pennsylvania, and others); (4) the evolution of democratic thought following the French Revolution and, in Britain,

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the resultant emancipation of Jews and others; and (5) modern Hindu ideology (stressing a pluralist theology) and the creation of an important pluralistic state—India—in 1947. Until recently the old establishmentarian arrangement was carried on, oddly enough, through the imposition of secular Marxism as the official “religion” or ideology in the countries where it has been dominant.

Christians and others have proposed various responses to the challenge presented by alternative formulations of truth and practice. The positions are (1) absolute exclusivism, (2) absolute relativism, (3) hegemonistic inclusivism, (4) realistic pluralism, and (5) regulative pluralism.

1. The first of these positions has been common in many religions that simply see their own tradition of revelation or authority as true and that view other systems of belief as false—possibly as demonic. A sophisticated variant of this position is found in Karl Barth (1886–1968) and in Hendrik Kraemer’s *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (1938), which was in part founded on Barth’s ideas. It had great influence because it seemed to resolve the problem many missionaries felt, preaching the Christian faith amid sometimes attractive non-Christian cultures and feeling the need for a theological basis for rejecting them. Basically, the Barthian position was that the gospel in Christ transcends religion. The Christian religion, like others, represents a human projection (this was in the tradition of Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud), though in response to the gospel. Other religions are considered *simply* projections, that is, without benefit of the gospel. What Barth and Kraemer neglected was that other faiths (e.g., Buddhism and Hinduism) could use similar arguments. Kraemer added the point that every religious system is totalitarian, by which he meant “organic,” with each part borrowing part of its meaning from the whole. So even apparent similarities between religions are actually differences, because correspondingly similar items take their meanings in part from different items in each unique system. But this, though a partly valid insight, if taken too far would make comparisons between religions impossible. Every person’s face may be unique, but faces can be compared. In brief, absolute exclusivism seems to fail. If every tradition insists on its own diversity and unique authority, the way is open for absolute relativism.

2. Absolute relativism relies on the complete incommensurability of differing systems, perhaps because one has to be an insider to experience the meaning of each. So every faith has no access to the truth of the others. A position of relativism was traditional in Jainism and might be deduced from positions such as that of D. Z. Phillips in his *The Concept of Prayer* (1966), itself influenced by some remarks of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951). But it is doubtful whether an absolutely relativistic position can be sustained, since it appears to destroy notions of truth and rightness.

3. Hegemonistic inclusivism sees truth in other faiths. Nevertheless, it still

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asserts the priority of the chosen faith. A highly tolerant variety was espoused by Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), who saw God's essence as unknowable and yet partially describable symbolically through conjectures. Although he held to the priority of the Christian faith, he acknowledged conjectural truth in other faiths. Some varieties may be limited in scope to particular traditions, because of the situation of the author. Thus, J. N. Farquhar (1861–1929) could allude to Christ as “the Crown of Hinduism” in his book so titled (1913): This was the statement of a liberal missionary position. There have been many writings in the second half of the twentieth century (e.g., the documents of Vatican II and the works of Karl Rahner) that deal with other religious traditions from an inclusivist point of view. This trend is reinforced, and in practice presupposed, by the rise of interreligious dialogue.

Throughout history and contemporary cultures, one can also find numerous cases of non-Christian faiths adopting a kind of inclusivist position. For instance, Islam has always given special recognition to peoples of the Book, namely Christians and Jews. This inclusivist recognition was made formal particularly during the Ottoman Empire through the *millet* system, which gave partial autonomy to these groups within the overarching fabric of an Islamic system.

4. Although it had hegemonic overtones, the attempt by Swami Vivekenanda (1863–1902) to present a genuinely pluralistic position at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, where he achieved considerable publicity and fame, was an important modern expression of “realistic pluralism.” According to this position all religions are so many different paths to, and versions of, the one Truth. Vivekenanda expounded this idea in relation to the diverse levels of truth described in Advaita Vedanta (nondualism), in which the Ultimate is inexpressible and at a lower level appears as God (Allah, et al.). The differing faiths at a lower level use differing symbolism (Allah, Vishnu, Amitabha, et al.) of the One. Vivekenanda stressed the mystical path, which both in the Hindu and other traditions means that the Ultimate is ineffable. Since the God of worship is at a lower level, there were critics of his position among Christian, Hindu, and other theists not mystically inclined. In the Hindu tradition others followed the general position of Vivekenanda, notably Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) and Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948). His position was important in the framing and theory of the Indian pluralistic constitution, since it gave an intelligible place to minority religions such as Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Islam. (Sikhism however had problems because it has been treated as a form of Hinduism.)

In the Christian setting, the best-known version of realistic pluralism is that of John Hick. In his *Interpretation of Religion* (1989) and other writings (notably *God and the Universe of Faiths*, 1973), he has outlined his “Copernican revolution,” seeing religions like the planets, in orbit around the Real, rather than seeing them all revolving around Christianity. Each faith has its insights into the nature of the Real, which, however, is like a *noumenon* of which the empirical

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religions are so to speak *phenomena* (he uses here the well-known Kantian distinction). To the objection that one cannot “get round behind the phenomena” to see the Real, Hick responds that it is an inductive hypothesis, proceeding from the evidence of religions. It takes a religious, rather than a naturalistic or projectionist, view of religious experiences or the responses of humanity toward the Real. In brief, it infers the existence of the divine from the testimony of religious people. Naturally, absolute exclusivists committed to such slogans as *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (“outside the church no salvation”) will resist Hick’s ecumenical realistic pluralism.

Not altogether different, but less extensively worked out philosophically and harder to fit into the data of world religions (notably Theravada Buddhism), is the personalistic pluralism of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who sees all religions as striving toward a personally conceived Ultimate. An earlier kind of this realistic pluralism was that of William E. Hocking (1873–1966), for whom the Real was Absolute Mind.

5. Finally, “regulative pluralism” (where “regulative” is a term drawn from Kant) is the notion that while the differing religions have differing values and beliefs, they are undergoing historical evolution, growing toward a common truth. (There were elements of this idea in Hocking’s work.) But that common truth is as yet undefined. This position was sketched by R. C. Zaehner (1913–1974) in his *Concordant Discord* (1970), and it is implicit in certain forms of religious dialogue that do not prescribe the way dialogue will end. It is found also in my own view of the evolution of religious truth (with Steven Konstantine, *A Christian Systematic Theology in World Context*, 1991).

Meanwhile, however, as a backlash against various forms of liberalism, there are numerous militant movements across the world that reaffirm a kind of absolutist exclusivism (Muslim Brotherhood, Hindu revivalism, Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, Russian Orthodox patriotism, Protestant fundamentalism, Jewish religious nationalism, and others). Nevertheless, because political pluralism is necessary for peaceful coexistence and although both realistic and regulative pluralism have attractions, hegemonic inclusivism will remain the principal motif among theologians in the more liberal forms of the various religious traditions.

NINIAN SMART

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V

PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS
ETHICO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS



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On Knowing What is Uncertain

THERE IS A PARADOX abroad today—a paradox which indeed was secretly with us in older, more closed, less cosmopolitan days. I want to explore it, for it bears directly upon our religious, political, and social condition.

The paradox is this: on the one hand nothing seems more certain than faith or more compelling than religious experience. On the other hand, nothing seems less certain than any one particular belief system, for to any one system there are so many vital and serious alternatives. One might, of course, if one has little faith or exiguous experience of the right sort, see the plural character of the world's religions as a good ground for skepticism about the whole lot. But even here the worm of relativity can eat into certitude, since not only do differing nonreligious world views present themselves, such as scientific humanism, various Marxisms, and so forth, but also the question remains as to why we should dismiss in this way all the long and rich history of the transcendent as it presents itself in human history and affairs.

Initially I shall discuss primary religious claims and only later comment on the effect of our conclusions upon world views in general, both secular and religious. So to return to our paradox: the person of faith is certain, but necessarily what she or he believes in is uncertain.

One reason why the issue of religious knowledge is important for political and social conditions is that if we should come to adopt what may be described as a “soft epistemology” in matters of religion, then this will reinforce the case for pluralism and a kind of federal approach toward religious relations. It helps to

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create what may be called a higher-order criticism to judge religions themselves and to set the tone of a more embracing world view.

But first it is useful to glance at some usages of religious language. It is indeed a common claim that in religion there is knowledge. Thus Clement of Alexandria writes of the gnostic who worships God “who was manifested indeed by the Lord so far as it was possible for the learners to understand, but apprehended by those whom the Lord has elected for knowledge. . . .”¹ The notion of *gnosis* reflects the idea of a cognitive direct experience, which in this case is conveyed through Christ and requires grace. On the other hand, in some religious traditions knowledge or insight (for example, *vidyā/vijjā, prajñā/panñā*) may be, as in Theravāda Buddhism and certain other forms of yoga practice, a do-it-yourself matter. Very often this knowledge is associated with the mystical, that is to say, the contemplative, path. Indeed there is greater naturalness in speaking of knowledge in this context, because mysticism very often contains features which give it a cognitive air. There are procedures for gaining insight (even in religions where the dominant accent is on God’s power and grace and human incapacity to attain to a control over divine self-disclosure). There is often rather abstract language used to delineate the object of knowledge, often thus far removed from the more colorful language of the mythic ambience of worship of the gods and God. There is a sense that a kind of intuition is involved. But there are differences of course from ordinary knowledge—for the highest experience is often depicted as nondual. Its emptiness of ordinary experience drives the mystic toward the negative way, which subtracts from any kind of content to the knowledge.

In the *bhakti* faiths, from the world of early Christianity to the faith of the Lotus Sutra, and in *dharma*-projecting traditions, from the Judaism of the Torah to the Islam of the *shari'a*, and from the customary deliverances of the tribal path to the oracles of priests and shamans, there is a powerful sense that revelation gives knowledge. Knowledge rooted in revelation is contrasted with what is known by ordinary perception and inference, but it is knowledge nevertheless. Especially in the Hindu tradition was there insistence on *śabda* or transcendental testimony as a *pramāṇa* or source of knowledge.

Indeed the classical Indian schema of three main *pramāṇas* is a convenient framework for analyzing the developing crisis in the concept of religious knowledge. As well as transcendental testimony, there is perception, which incorporates yogic perception or what we in the West would recognize as at least one form of religious experience, and inference or more generally reasoning. In the religious context we are in effect speaking of revelation, religious experience, and reason.

The last reminds us that some religious traditions have tried to put religious knowledge on a scientific basis by the standards of that day. But though there may still be some life left in both the cosmological and teleological arguments, as I have argued, as also Swinburne and others in various ways, I do not think the arguments are very vigorous, and they surely must remain controversial, not probative. Thus we may think that the existence of the cosmos requires explanation, and suggest an X which is its source; but that X has to be clothed in at least a wispy attribute or two before the explanation is anything more than empty. But why these attributes rather than others? Different gods so to say could be candidates for Prime Mover. In any event the agnostic option remains powerful. The wispily clothed Prime Mover needs to be hooked to some living God of revelation, and this too becomes problematic—for why hook to Viṣṇu rather than Yahweh?

It looks then as if the *pramāṇa* of inference can do little more than supply us with a little assurance that our faith in the transcendent is not absurd. Or it itself may serve as a kind of meditative discipline. Thus Mahāyāna emptiness philosophy is in effect a dialectic in the service of insight and enlightenment, a way of bringing the intellect to bear in a way which is itself a mode of concentration. It has, so to speak, an engineering function; engineering, that is, a higher intuition or experience of emptiness. But again the Madhyamika arguments are, like the so-called proofs, controversial. Typically, such arguments present grounds for a kind of metaphysical vision, a world view, but alternative visions and world views are known to be available.

And the reason for the decay of natural theology and its Eastern cousins is fairly clear, aside from problems of argumentation. It is the consequence of a breakup of the intellectual world and an increasingly clearly perceived autonomy of scientific in-

quiry. That autonomy can be interpreted aggressively, as by positivism: *extra scientiam nulla salus*. Or it can be seen more pluralistically. Science then becomes, in its substance, an ingredient in a possible metaphysical world view whose ultimate bases lie beyond science. Whereas science, for all its softening up by Kuhn and Feyerabend, has procedures which yield widely accepted and useful results, metaphysics and world-view construction yield up options, opinions, visions, and therefore, of course, also debates.

But what of the other *pramāṇas*? Matters are somewhat different with them. If you have an argument which is shown to be defective you then no longer have it. But even if your interpretation of your experience is called into doubt, you still have the experience. This relates somewhat to revelation too. Revelation can be treated up to a point as a record of human experiences and their effects. But before I get on to this, let me just sketch some of the moves that can be made in the modern era during which revelations, as embodied in scriptures, have come under a double challenge – from the perception of the plural world of religions and from critical historical probing.

Criticism, which is the leading edge as it were of a different epistemology and cosmology from that which had previously dominated the faith tradition, stimulates differing moves. One is to evolve a form of liberal Christianity which takes an inductivist view of revelation. The texts are, as it were, a screen through which you penetrate to historical events and experiences which themselves are the self-revelation of God. The Bible (or the Vedas) thus becomes testimony to revelation, but fallible testimony. Typically liberal Christianity has involved a synthesis of prevailing liberal-scientific values and the Christian – or the Hindu – message. This may be criticized by traditionalists and others as conceding too much to the fallible spirit of the age. Thus another move is to try to maintain a traditionalist synthesis – most notably the Catholic attempt to ward off the critical challenge by a combination of ecclesiastical discipline and Thomist ideas (but ideas which had to be themselves modernly interpreted and so had to become neo-Thomist). That move largely went out with Vatican II, which opened up the possibility of a Catholic variant on liberal Protestantism. It also allowed for a synthesis critical of this, namely between Marxism and Christianity, which reinterpreted the New

Testament in a radical way but again abandoned in effect the old *Spiritu Sancto dictante*. Another possible move is a strongly transcendental inductivism. You take the scriptures as a record of a vertical self-revelation which owes nothing to human ideas and can stand as a place from which we may criticize human values. In the West this is Barth. In the East there are analogies arising out of the two-level theory of truth, as in Śāmkara and in forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

This indeed is the problem for Barth and for other unique transcendentalists. The argument can be put as follows:

The ultimate transcends all human creations including religions. The ultimate is _____. Therefore _____ is not challenged by alternative religious positions; on the contrary they are challenged by _____.

But the problem is that if we fill up the blanks with some determinate characterization of the ultimate, say Christ, then the others can fill in with their own determinate ultimate, say Brahman-ātman, as the criterion for judging religions. So we now have the alternatives laid out once again, but now at a higher level. And how do we judge between *them*? Well, we can have a meta-transcendent X, but it is an X which genuinely has to be utterly characterless. And is even the goal and focus of the mystical path, in the cloud of unknowing, utterly characterless?

Another path is to say indeed, somewhat in line with this, that all revelations point to the same truth (ineffable again it has to be). That is a possible position, not in my view too realistic from the standpoint of the history of religions, but attractive nonetheless. The latest version of this position is that of John Hick. The logic of it is to say that all embodied, lower-level religions have much truth, and so have to be accepted as equals in a kind of federation of faiths. This again is attractive in today's world. But it has problems because many actual believers will react against this irenic synthesis bought at the cost of underplaying important practical differences over peace and war, or the place of women, or the relative importance of various ritual activities.

The reactions of actual believers often go far beyond this in criticizing criticism and stressing uniqueness. Such a neoconservative reaction can be seen in a number of religious contexts. In the

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modern world it is typically a synthesis between traditional religion and nationalism of one kind or another. Typically too it tends to use the substance rather than the methodology of modernity, so that it becomes in this degree cognitively distant from the modern mainstream.

But in practice, whatever the intellectual position which is reached, traditions do tend to take the scriptures, together with certain elements of ritual activity, institutional organization, and so forth, as given; and I shall later return to consider whether anything of this givenness can be taken to yield knowledge. But also in rationalizing the given believers are liable to look on the scriptures as a record of religious experience and places of history and the cosmos as experientially interpreted. And so already the *pramāṇa* of testimony includes and points to experience.

There are of course differing kinds of religious experience—numinous visions, inner mystical states, shamanistic ecstasies, moral conversions, panhenenic apprehensions, and so forth—but some recent discussions of mysticism help to illuminate some main issues which apply across the whole field. Debate primarily has touched on the relation of experience and interpretation, and this question highlights our starting paradox.

One way into the question is to consider whether there is a single sort of mystical experience, clothed differently so to speak by the differences of cultural and creedal interpretation. On this view there is an essential similarity between the experiences of the Sufi, the Hindu yogi, the Buddhist contemplative, the Christian mystic, the Taoist sage, and so on. If so, then how do we account for the very different things they say? Well, it is because their hindsight view of their experience, and their preconditioning too, have helped to color and embroider their accounts of what happened. But we can detect from a core of similar things said about the experience itself that it is alike. There is naturally a host of questions and methodological problems which arise wormlike out of this can. Personally, however, I am favorable to the likeness of mystical experience thesis, and favorable also to the thesis of the diversity of types of religious experience.

For all that, it is clear that the meaning of an experience, as of other events in the life of a religious person, will depend upon concepts and attitudes which he or she already holds, and,

for the most part, these will not be epistemologically dependent upon the type of experience. But experiences nevertheless can be *suggestive* of differing kinds of theology and doctrine, of ethics and ritual practice, and so forth. Numinous experiences suggest dualism, dependence, and grace, while mystical experiences suggest nonduality, questing, self-discovery, emptiness, and the negative path. The numinous suggests authority, commandment, mercy, dynamism; the mystical suggests illumination, self-discipline, compassion, quietude. But though there is this suggestive relationship (and it helps to explain differing patterns of religious development), the converse effects are typically even more powerful. My numinous is Yahweh, not Kṛṣṇa; or Allah, not Śiva; my cloud of unknowing is Christ, the birth of Christ in the soul, not the luminous realization of the Buddha-nature. One person treads the path to nirvana; another seeks the inner meaning of the Torah.

So I think there is a gap that can be opened up between a relatively homogeneous experience and varieties of interpretation. Some say: All experience is interpreted. However, there are still differences between highly ramified and minimally ramified descriptions of experience.

The interpretative gap is an epistemological one. If the degree of interpretation is great then the experience guarantees less. The less ramified the description the more it guarantees. Thus if I have a certain experience of a white-colored figure, I can say with fair confidence, "There is a white-clothed person"; but if I see no more details, it is more of a gamble claiming that I see the Pope. If I say, "In that dazzling obscurity I saw the Timeless One," it is less of a distance from experience than saying, "I saw the Timeless One who is Christ himself." Christ ties us among other things to a sequence of historical events and a rather complicated doctrine of incarnation and the godhead.

As we would expect, each religion and each subreligion is unique, because of its differing past and special combination of motifs. Each has elements echoed in other traditions, either by similarity or by borrowing. We find uniquenesses and typology. It is like our own case: my nose is like others' noses, but it is also unique in its configuration and history (even identical twins have tiny differences, as well as the divergences of location and experience).

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We would expect, then, some typological likenesses in other traditions than our own. Such echoes have themselves a paradoxical effect. They reduce the epistemological weight which the experiences give to particular doctrines and practices, but they increase the epistemological weight of the more minimal claims to have contact with the transcendent. The relative universality of experiences of a given type is ground for taking them seriously, but that itself weakens the particularist claims.

A community, then, which nourishes its members in a certain kind of religion and thereby helps its members to have what they see as contact with the transcendent can make some claim to a sort of wisdom and knowledge. (I leave on one side the question: But what if all this supposition of the transcendent is a grand illusion? I shall, however, return to it.)

Moreover, it is not just that there is knowledge of the ultimate. There are other claims to knowledge which could be made—that the experiences in question have certain fruitful effects on life, perhaps on the community as a whole, and so on. There is knowledge—if true—that the sacraments “work” in terms of creating appropriate fruits. The person whose life is changed can well say, “I know that my redeemer liveth.” Viewed phenomenologically, religion has whatever power it has, and Christ or Viṣṇu or whatever experiential or ritual focus of faith has the power it has, and this cannot be taken away by the mere disproof that there is a Viṣṇu as such (not that any proof of the sort exists, or could exist). So we might say: On the one hand communities may make claim to some contact with the ultimate, and this they can naturally speak of as knowledge. And in a harder sense of *know* they can be said to know what the effects of the focus are. This is a sort of phenomenological positivism.

But the claim about the transcendent cannot be to knowledge of the details. Near the edges of the ramification of beliefs which form part of the organism of a community’s tradition the epistemological weight of experience becomes slight, and the thought of prophets and mystics elsewhere should remind a community of the plausibility of an inductivist position on revelation and the given. That in turn points to a less ramified knowledge.

I may still, as an adherent of a tradition, feel that the collage of ideas and practices which constitute the world view through

which I live my life is good and highly persuasive and makes better sense than alternatives. I can have reasons for my world view. But I can hardly disprove alternative world views any more than I can prove my own. It is true that if a world view includes very rigidly deductive material, then I can in a sense say that, as a total package, it is false because of one or more wrong items in it. But it is usually possible for the other community to modify its package, so my critique merely changes the shape of the other collage slightly.

The thought that we can have reasons to believe in one world view rather than another, and that though we may have fragmentary knowledge of the ultimate and an awareness of the actual power of our focus of faith upon ourselves, leads me to reject relativism (there are of course other reasons as well). But it implies too the rejection of absolutism, if by this is meant the claim that we can or could be absolutely sure about one world view being exclusively or most comprehensively true. We can have faith in what the world view delineates, and belief that the world view is as true a one as can be found and better than all others. But these are epistemologically soft claims, and so I use the expression "soft nonrelativism" to characterize the reality of our situation.

The same by the way applies when we stretch our concerns to secular as well as transcendent-related systems of belief and practice. There cannot be proof of a Marxism or of scientific humanism or of some form of religion. The world views have their plausibilities, and evidences and arguments can be adduced. But think of the alternative evidences.

So we cannot seriously be absolutists, and yet we cannot say either that all world views are equally persuasive or valuable. To whom, you may ask? It seems to me that soft nonrelativism suggests that world views are like aesthetic objects in a sense. Whether Manet is a great artist is gradually determined as humanity sifts its experience of art and of Manet. I rather like the idea propounded by Duncan Howlett of a Council of Human Judgment to which we in the long term appeal. Truth will out, but gradually and probably always plurally and defectively. But there are reasons, as I have said. One of the criteria turns out to be dogmatism itself. Given that soft nonrelativism is right, then absolutistic religious movements cannot be all good, and are likely to be greatly mis-

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guided. Likewise, it is unlikely that a world view which is accepted uncritically can make much sense of scientific knowledge, since criticism is part of the process by which the latter is arrived at. So there are some higher-order criteria for evaluating world views.

There are some consequences of this. The first is that the only real basis for the state to propound an ideology is if there is unanimity about it. Otherwise, there should be separation of world view (party, church) and state. Since, moreover, there are no proofs of world view, toleration of world-view divergences is the only rational position to adopt. It may be that some world views themselves are not tolerant. Should they be tolerated? It seems reasonable that we should reduce intolerance, and that may mean some restraints ultimately upon nontolerant groups. But the intention should be to allow as many world views to live together as possible, in order to maximize toleration.

Another apparent consequence of soft nonrelativism is that the pursuit of truth, so far as it can be achieved, and of practical fruits which are good for life, implies that the delineation of various world views should be part of education. This is an aspect of education severely neglected. We turn out young people from high schools and colleges most often ignorant of the varieties of Christianity, Judaism, Eastern faiths, Southern cultures, Marxisms, and humanisms. Why do we teach the world's physical geography but not its spiritual or mental geography? Underlying this thought are twin aims. First, we should understand other world views than our own simply from the point of view of their actual power in history and in the present. Second, an educated person should be capable of attempting sensitively to evaluate alternatives.

Soft nonrelativism as I have expounded it implies also a greater space for trust or faith. Often traditional faiths teach their traditions as if their truth were known. But what can be known is rather limited, on my argument, and is largely confined to what immediately concerns religious encounter and various fruits and effects. But subjectively a person can be not only committed to the gamble that one's world view represents, but also sure that it "works." And one can be convinced of the essential, though unprovable, correctness of one's world view.

There is no reason why affirming one's world view should not be a matter of passion. It may be that soft nonrelativism

increases the room for passion, but it reduces the room for fanaticism.

Lastly, I would like to make the following observation. In a plural world and in a pluralistic society the possibilities of individual choice of religion have, of course, multiplied. This is part of the decline of authority and therefore dogma (the rise of rhetoric in the religious preacher may itself reflect this). For both epistemological and social reasons the old role of religious doctrine has changed, for it is hard to enforce any conformity. Thus authoritative figures, such as the Pope, themselves become the objects of choice. One elects to be a Catholic, since walking out of the Church is so easy, and excommunication holds few terrors. Now all this does not imply that the doctrinal dimension of religion is unimportant, for a very good reason: it is one of the major means of keeping religious attitudes pointing toward the transcendent. And the importance of this lies partly in the way it allows the religious person or community to stand above or beside the world, and to have a position from which to criticize our institutions and values. In other words, the transcendent supplies a place from which to criticize, not to dogmatize. It is a partly precarious place, for it is only found through commitment and experience. But it enables religion itself to take up a fresh, incisive role.

Thus there is a sort of solidarity, in a strange new way, between a plural religious world and the heritage of the Enlightenment. For the free and scientific society is critical and imaginative, and the life of religion can offer both a transcendent place of criticism and a path to liberating the imagination. But such criticism needs not only the transcendent reference point but also the nourishment of spiritual values through that kind of religious knowledge which still remains to us.

NOTE

1. J. E. L. Oulton and Henry Chadwick, trans., *Alexandrian Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 94.

The Epistemology of Pluralism: The Basis of Liberal Philosophy

Uncertainty of world view

Belief-systems or worldviews, whether they be religious or non-religious, collective or individual, official or informal, are hard to refute. They are also difficult to establish. This feature of worldviews has important applications in politics and education. Let us first, though, before seeing what those applications are exhibit some of the features of worldviews implied in the dichotomies listed above.

Some are religious, such as Catholicism, or Theravada Buddhism, or Mormonism. Generally speaking, religious worldviews point to the transcendent—to a God or nirvana or Absolute, lying ‘beyond’ this universe. Secular or non-religious worldviews on the other hand, such as Marxism or scientific humanism, reject the trandescendent or other-worldly. There is a tendency both in society and academic studies to draw a firm line between religion and non-religion. This is scarcely justified : in real life secular and religious worldviews sometimes blend, as in liberal Protestantism or Catholic nationalism in a country such as Poland, and sometimes are in severe conflict, as in Marxist Albania, where official atheism is in contention with Islam and Orthodox Christianity as “feudal remnants.” Blenders and rivals should belong to the same category.

Sometimes worldviews are official. In previous centuries in Europe it was common to operate the maxim *cuius regio eius religio*. Official religion was important, because adhering to it gave a citizen rights greater than those accorded to nonconformists. In more recent times, Marxism of one sort or another typically did the same job, though often more rigorously, because of the capacities of the modern totalitarian State. Advancement in Romania would have been impossible without adherence to “scientific socialism” of the

Ninian Smart : is Professor of Comparative Religions at University of California, Santa Barbara campus (USA).

shape approved by Nicolae Ceausescu. But other worldviews have no official status, and may be tolerated in individuals and groups—for instance, most religions in the United States, and various secular ideologies.

Sometimes worldviews are collective and sometimes they are individual. Collective worldviews are common, and mean that a group will share in a worldview: for instance a denomination or political movement will proclaim its official worldview, as something held in common. But individuals may, even while belonging to such organizations, have their own variants. Or else individuals may have arrived at their own idiosyncratic worldviews. Also, differing wings of a movement may have a differing slant on the collective worldview. In a sense, since every person has her or his own set of values, however incoherently felt and expressed, there are five billion worldviews—as many as there are people. But since they cluster in various ways and derive partly or largely from pre-existing clusters, we can schematically arrange them under varying labels, such as 'Buddhism', 'Protestantism', 'Scottish Calvinism' and so forth. Naturally, each macro-worldview such as Christianity is a whole shoal of differing micro worldview, such as Southern Baptism, Congregationalism, and so on, and other variations.

So much for a brief typology of worldviews. Next, we may note that there are segments of worldviews which become incorporated into differing schemes. For instance, modern cosmology, drawn from scientific astronomy, may enter as a segment both into modernist Theravada Buddhism and into liberal Protestantism. Thus the late K.N. Jayatilleke in *The Message of the Buddha* (1975) explicitly drew attention to the congruence between modern cosmology and traditional Buddhist views, while a recognition of modern cosmology is built into part of the liturgy of the U.S. Episcopalian Book of Common Prayer. Again, it has often been in the past that national churches have been counted as official or establishmentarian. In such cases, national loyalty become a segment, with certain attended rituals, ethical injunctions and so on, of the Christian worldview as held in such a country. Swedish Lutheranism is thus *Swedish* and German *German*.

One of the ways in which a worldview may change is by in-corporating new segments into its overall structure. Thus, broadly speaking, the worldview of medieval Christendom incorporated a roughly Greek cosmology derived from Aristotle. But after Galileo, it came to weave into its fabric a roughly Newtonian cosmology. And now, with an expanding universe it has to terms with the vast scale of the cosmos.

The same sort of thing applies to philosophical ideas: a worldview hopes for consistency and may call on a metaphysical scheme such as that of Aristotle as reinterpreted by St Thomas Aquinas to give it coherent structure. In due course such a reshaped worldview might get official blessing, as Aquinas' did in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII in 1879. Often blended worldviews simply float on the waters of religion, having greater or lesser degrees of fashion: such as differing forms of unofficial Marxism, such as those of Gramsci, Lukacs, Marcuse, and so on; or the varying theologies

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of Barth, Bultmann, Tillich, Rahner and others in the recent half-century.

All this is a preliminary indication that a worldview is not so easily refuted, because it contains replaceable segments. So to show that Aristotelean cosmology is radically false does not refute anything but that particular form of Christian worldview which has Aristoteleanism woven into it. It will be open to the adherent of the faith to say "But that cosmology is not of the essence of the faith."

Part of the reason for this possibility of evading refutation by revision — of revisionism in short — arises from the fact that doctrinal schemes are not Euclidean systems. They may include some deduction, but it is more opposite to look on its inferences as resulting from suggestions. Belief in Christ does not entail humility, but suggests it. The New Testament does not entail the Trinity but suggests it. The impermanence of the world suggests that everything is unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), but does not entail it. Moreover, the relation between differing dimensions of worldviews tends to be a soft one. A certain kind of experience may suggest the dualism between God and humans; another may suggest their fusion and union. But the experiential dimension and the doctrinal are not clamped together by necessity. And so on. In brief, worldviews as living entities are schemes held together by bonds less rigid than those of Euclidean systems.

In so far as a worldview is held collectively, it often happens that the organization in which it is embedded may be weakening, and this is how the worldview fades away. Or it may be that the organization feels at length that it can get along without the worldview, and so it becomes increasingly irrelevant. Such kinds of fading away are not so much direct refutations of a worldview: but since a worldview straddles the area between the person and the whole cosmos, its lower branches, thickly growing round the person are the most immediately important and if they wither then the whole worldview withers and fades.

Another reason for the difficulty in refuting a worldview in a decisive and straight forward way is that each worldview deals with the limits of the world. Traditional religions have postulated something which lies beyond the cosmos — a transcendent being (God) or State (nirvana). Secular ideologies in denying God and the possibility of extracosmic salvation have in this very act reached the limits of the cosmos. All this of course means that a worldview is transemprirical and so cannot be decisively disproved by empirical means. Neither the religious person who points to miracles or the fruits of spirituality refutes atheism; nor does the atheist in pointing to fraudulent miracles or the achievements of science refute religion.

In short, then, it is hard to show that a given religious system is false. But similarly, it is hard to prove any system. You might have some reasons for faith. But they would not amount to proof. They could be of different kinds. For instance a Muslim might argue that it is not possible to believe that a mere human, and a relatively uneducated one at that, could have

produced the numinous wonders of Qur'an. Surely it must have divine origin. But it is open to any sceptic to think that human genius does some amazing things : consider the precociousness of Mozart. Perhaps the Prophet was a genius with worlds, bubbling up out of his unconscious mind. Once you have faith that the Qur'an is revelatory of the mind of God then no doubt some deductions about right belief and behaviour are possible but since they are built on an edifice of soft reasons, they too are soft, unstable. Again, to turn to a different kind of reason, you might be persuaded that the cosmos requires explanation, and that such an explanation is to be supplied by postulating a God. But that too is a soft piece of reasoning. For one thing there are objections to all the traditional arguments for the existence of God. Then in a genuine religious system, a God has a certain character : the proof (alleged) of the existence of a God does not tell you which God.

It may be that your reason for belief in a worldview is because of some religious experience or some miracle you have undergone. But even if you have a vision of God or of the Buddha Amitabha it does not guarantee that the complex God or Buddha to whom you give your loyalty is the focus or begetter of your experience. There may be some alternative or naturalistic explanation available. Or even if there is not one available, its existence can be postulated.

You may have a spiritual preceptor or guru. You may have reasons to trust such a person. But you cannot be sure that he is uttering the truth. He may be spiritual but not insightful; or authoritative without being spiritual; or his messages may be at variance with the tradition out of which he claims to come. Besides, there are many gurus, often contradicting one another. Similar remarks of course apply to institutional authorities, such as the Catholic Church or the Lubavitcher tradition of Judaism, etc.

It is of course an obvious feature of today's world that we are aware in most cultures of the divergences of religions and ideologies. In Western countries in particular where individualism is well developed, people have choices in living and need to ponder how they can individually sort out the truth. Whereas thirty years ago or more it was possible up to a point to conceal the importance of the divergences between world religions and the challenges that they pose to one another (and the challenges posed to one another by subtraditions) this is no longer possible. We live in a plural world and one which is seen to be plural.

By consequence, it may be that one can have reasons for faith in a given tradition or worldview, but one cannot have proof. Indeed things which we might think of as constituting proofs, such as that Jesus rose from the dead, themselves cannot be believed apart from the apparatus of belief which they are supposed to prove.

In brief, then: worldviews cannot be refuted and they cannot be proved. Even utter scepticism and neutrality about worldviews—what we may call

the agnostic alternative—is doubtful. For we can easily doubt whether agnosticism is the right path, since it may cut you off from the fruits which faith can bring, or the decisiveness which a conscious atheism can bring. All worldviews, then, are doubtful, including the repudiation of all other worldviews.

Now what does this show about education? And what does education in turn show about society at large?

If no worldview is certain, it follows that it is not right to teach a worldview as if it is certain. A parent or educator may value her or his own tradition, but this does not justify teaching it in a dogmatic or in a socially closed form. This applies to public schooling of course as well as private instruction: the latter can sometimes occur in a ghettoized form which prevents a young person from meeting people of a differing persuasion.

It is necessary here to make an aside. In the present context we are talking about teaching a worldview in the sense of presenting it in a mode of advocacy. We are not here thinking of another mode, namely that of description and analysis, such as is practised by disciplines known as Religious Studies in English-speaking countries (as distinguished from Theology) and as History of Religions (*histoire des religions*, *Religionswissenschaft*, etc.) in other places. Clearly, in the context of informing people about the religious forces in the world pluralism is necessary because in fact there is a multiplicity of religious and other worldviews which have greater or lesser impact upon society. One might say that in the study of worldviews a sort of descriptive pluralism is necessary anyway. But I would argue that also in the context of reflecting about religious truth or of presenting it from the position of advocacy it is necessary to be pluralist at least in the sense of openness to other alternatives.

Another aside is in order. Until recently it has not been at all usual to teach the history and analysis of religions in an impartial manner, or to think of the power rather than the truth or falsity of ideas. There has been a dominant motif—whether in faculties of theology or departments of Marxism-Leninism in Communist bloc countries—namely, to sell ideas or to assume their truth. The history of religions, until the Sixties, tended to exist at the margin of Christian institutions. Even today there is insufficient attention to the task of trying, as objectively and impartially as the subject matter allows, to describe religions and ideologies as they are, and to depict rituals, organizations and so on in the same manner. There has been a tendency, moreover, for subjectivist views (concentrating for instance on the vagaries of hermeneutics) to be fashionable, and in a way there is no harm in that, except that research programs need a more optimistic direction if they are to flourish. In fact the quality of work on religions and ideologies has greatly improved in the last fifty years and no doubt will go on improving.

Even if we are all sinners, it does no good to command sin, but rather to hold up ideals of virtue.

In brief, both from the side of description and from the side of normative presentation or reflection, there is a need for openness and pluralism. From this angle, it is a necessary pre-supposition for good education and research that we live in a Popperish society—one of openness and criticism. In this sense the liberal society, by a paradox, seems in principle inescapable if we are to pursue the truth !

The Paradox of Liberalism

It is indeed a paradox that the pursuit of openness should as it were force a liberal society upon us. And we may begin to doubt this inexorability of liberalism when we realize that worldviews are not just propositional but incorporate norms or imperatives. If imperatives contradict one another surely we are entitled to choose. So if we are adherents of some practical system say Shi'i republicanism in the mode of Khomeini or Nicaraguan Marxism in the style of Tomas Borge, should we not feel entitled to build a society on such a basis, which means in effect banishing liberalism?

The fact that imperatives may contradict one another, and indeed they do, may cause us to reflect about the alternative ways in which societies may be organized. Now clearly some rules in a society have to be universal if they are to work at all : for instance the rules of the road, air traffic regulations, and so on. But it does not follow that all rules are of this kind. What about the kosher slaughtering of animals? Or similar Muslim practices? Or having suitable portions of Friday or Saturday or Sunday off, for religious observances ? Or similar Muslim practices? There is a whole lot of rules which can vary with people and sub-communities. Moreover, attitudes of citizens can change, to be more tolerant of behavioral diversity. In this connection the Ottoman Empire, with its *millet* system, and even the caste system in India, with its varieties of ritual and other obligations, might cause us to reflect. The problem with them of course is that they were unequal : the Christian and Jew in the Ottoman empire was inferior; and the caste system is hierarchical—not to mention fiercely unjust on those at the bottom of the heap : the untouchables.

The possibilities of normative or imperatival variation are insufficiently explored in modern societies. Yet this is often a cause for great friction. For instance, majority rule often imposes the imperatives of the majority on the minority. This is partly because liberal institutions (which are not so liberal when they are used to impose homogeneity of behavior on populations) grew up during the age of nationalism. The nation had to be built, so that everyone in France had to be French (but what about Bretons and Jews or more recently Algerians?); everyone in Czechoslovakia had to be Czech or Slovak (but what about the Sudeten Germans?); everyone in Romania should be Romanian (but what about the Hungarians of Transyl-

vania or the Muslims along the Danube ?).

Notoriously many of the present conflicts in the world come from struggles to preserve minority ways of life when the majority wishes to dominate among Southern Sudanese protesting against the dominance of Northern Shari'a; the Kurds in Iraq and elsewhere; the Basques in Spain; and so on.

Unfortunately, liberalism has often accompanied the homogeneous impulse. One reason for this is peculiar to the United States, which has been in the forefront of liberal institutions (though not always of liberal attitudes). America, in order to digest its great influx of migrants, used high schools as agencies to socialize and homogenize the offspring of the many peoples of Europe and elsewhere who came to her shores. It was important, for a working new society, to implant values of an even kind. Though America was federal as to regions, she was not federal as to cultures—she was not for instance at all like Yugoslavia. But as I have said the nationalist impulse in any case moved towards the model of homogeneity.

But the argument that I have used about truth applies also to imperatives. If it is at a deep level uncertain that Marxism or Christianity or atheism spells out the truth, it is equally uncertain whether salvation lies along the path of the sacraments or of Marxist praxis or of stoicism in the face of death with some admixture of *carpe diem*. What is right and wrong may be generally agreed, but not absolutely.

Now much of what a religion or worldviews teaches can already be available in a tolerant society. The pious Muslim can go to his mosque, wash his feet, abstain from alcohol and pray daily. It is true that he may not have the benefit of Islamic divorce laws or property regulations. But why not ? It is not beyond the wit of human beings to devise a pluriform law, as in India. Still, the pious Muslim might not get everything he might desire : for instance a total society which practices the Shari'a. The liberal should rule this out. But the Muslim could get let us say eighty per cent of what he might want. Other religions would do at least as well if not better. Given that he is outside of Israel (which could by the way do with more pluralism of norms : the grip of the Orthodox establishment is oppressive in this regard) the Jew could get practically everything he might wish, unless he desires to coerce people and ghettoize his children. The Protestant Christian could practically have all he or she might wish. And so we might argue as follows : under a pluriform system each worldview can get eighty per cent or more of its ultimate desires. But in a monolithic culture one worldview would get everything and every one else more or less nothing, or little.

In a tolerant society every community in effect would become a voluntary community. If you are Catholic you are free to leave : and if you are an Orthodox Jew—and so forth. It is clear of course that a major factor in belonging to a tradition is to have a sense of identity, on this case perhaps to be named 'belongingness'. Not everyone feels the need, but a lot of

people do feel it. We should not underestimate the need for people to associate. This would imply some degree of variation in behaviour among groups. And since human beings vary greatly, it would not be surprising if behavioral variegation should be tolerated and even encouraged in a modern society. Often education, however, works in the opposite direction.

Our argument began with the thought that no worldview or value-system can be disproved or proved. It would thus seem to be wrong for an education system to teach just one system of belief, but should allow for alternatives. This openness, we argued, should extend beyond truth to imperatives. This implies not just an open society, but one in which as much variegation as possible is permitted. Provided it is a free society, in which individuals can leave groups, then differing worldviews should be tolerated in such a society including divergences of imperatives.

But the air of paradox still remains. In pursuit of openness we seem to be demanding liberalism, while all other worldviews or value-systems are open to doubt. To this there are two replies. First, the 'liberalism' which seems to be a presupposition of a critical society and the dictates of education is not to be identified with a congeries of causes, such as welfare for the poor, a national medical service, boycotting apartheid regimes and the like. It is merely an arrangement where there is openness: it is merely, that is, a structure of social government which has no establishmentarian values, beyond this value, and a structure of arrangements where there is a free press, for instance, an independent judiciary and other such matters to prevent establishmentarianism and closure of options. It is probably best not to call this 'liberalism' after all: a better phrase might be 'disestablishmentarianism'—and what we seek is a radically disestablished society, with separation not just between Church (or mosque) and State, but between any worldview-bearing organization and State. Or to put it more plainly the State should have no worldview and should not in any way disadvantage a citizen for any belief or practice, unless it disadvantages others. Because we have defined religion rather narrowly in the past, there have been injustices which have caused problems for minorities and even majorities. A Marxist government could claim separation of Church and State, though Marxism—a kind of religion with its Party as Church—could be required. In pre-World War II Japan, Shinto was de rigueur but was defined as not being a religion—so you could have "freedom of religion" provided you acknowledged the sacred status of the Emperor. In post-World War II America, you could be persecuted for being a Communist, but such a treatment of Jews or Christians would have caused an outrage. So it is better to define disestablishment in terms of worldviews as a whole and not just in terms of narrowly defined religion. This is what I mean by a "radically disestablished society."

Such a society could take varied forms. It could be socialist, provided that arrangements were in force to protect the education system and the media from interference on behalf of any particular worldview. It could be

capitalist and welfare-oriented. It could be predominantly Muslim, provided Shari'a was not imposed on any but those who were voluntarily Muslims: no undue pressures would be put on those who converted into or away from Islam. It could be predominantly atheist. And so on.

This brings us to the second point which might be made about the accusation that a given worldview, namely liberalism, is entrenched. Apart from the fact that as we have seen a better term would be 'disestablishmentarianism', there is the point that the only values entrenched in the State would be higher-order ones—about procedures and structures. A tolerant and open structure would be presupposed by open education and general voluntarism: but it would in no wise prevent people from espousing any religious or non-religious worldview. So we might call the structure we have delineated "higher-order disestablishmentarianism". May be this is a mouthful but it well conveys what is the genuine presupposition of openness. It is what seems to follow from the epistemological situation. We might call all this argument a transcendental deduction of a structure for society.

The primary starting point of this paper is that worldviews are hard to refute or prove. This is a position which seems to spring ineluctably from the nature and history of worldviews. But, I recognize that there may be quite a few believers who are convinced somehow that they can have proof of a worldview. They confuse, in my view, their inner certitude with the outer certainty which proof might bring. But the very fact that religious belief requires faith and commitment (in many traditions), while secular ideologies too need more than such 'proofs' as may be brought to bear, indicates the essential correctness of the position here being expressed. Nevertheless, though I think that I have here produced what I consider to be a strong argument for radical disestablishmentarianism, no doubt it too does not amount to proof. I need therefore to recognize that some highly motivated (militant) Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Marxists, liberal atheists, and the like, will reject disestablishmentarianism. They might go so far as to enforce an established creed and slanted social order.

Radical Dis-establishment

First, we may need violence to resist those who will not eschew violence in pursuit of establishment. Second, more importantly let people vote freely. It is likely though of course not certain that they will want a free, open society—other things being equal. Third, there are societies in existence now which are some way towards radical disestablishment. Their success in economic and political terms can be a light for those who live in more restricted countries. Fourth, we may note that there is a factor in international affairs today which helps the cause of disestablishment: the possibility of migration. Those who dislike oppression can often find a way to go elsewhere. This helps to promote practical pluralism.

This is part of a global perspective which may be important. Because

of modern communications, transnational companies and so on the world is shrinking. Nationalism, while still vigorous, is also becoming less relevant. Transnational economic activities and cultural and other exchanges are altering the face of the earth. We have yet to think through the political implications of all this. But it highlights two facets of contemporary life. First, many worldviews dominant in one country are minority affairs elsewhere, through migration. So Islam, while dominant in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, for instance, is a minority religion in France and the United States. Second, as we move into a consciousness of being in a global society, we shall be well aware that even the statistically most dominant worldviews, such as Christianity and Islam, are in a world minority. Now minority religions have a greater interest in radical disestablishmentarianism than majority ones. So the urge to espouse the compromise felt by some in the open structure of society may be strong enough to overcome the vigorous factions of "fundamentalisms" which have arisen and will no doubt continue to arise as a backlash against the openness which such groups feel to be a threat to identity.

I therefore feel relatively optimistic about the view which I have here argued for. But we need to work as hard as we can towards such radical pluralism. We can take the pressure off minorities by reducing racism and political arrangements of unnecessary majority dominance. We can realize that secular ideologies, including liberal humanism, can have their aspects of oppression, so that the old formulae of separation of religion and the State are insufficient to protect us. We can work towards educational systems which consciously encourage teaching about the varieties of human beliefs, and do not entrench certain worldviews at the expense of others. Such moves can help to reinforce the march of radical disestablishmentarianism.

All this means that we must in the West take crosscultural studies with the utmost seriousness. The existence of many differing worldviews, and differing sub-worldviews, represents a rich deposit of human ideas and practices which will enrich us all. For this reason, if for no other, we do not want a homogenized world. This is where in the near future we need to watch critically the way global media are managed. If we do not watch out, a new and subtle establishmentarianism will come into existence where Kojak and J.B. Ewing will rule every Indian village and Malaysian township.

The epistemology of worldviews implies the necessity of pluralism. □

Does a Universal Standard of Value Need to be Higher-Order?

Systems of belief and values take various forms. First, there are systematic religions and ideologies. It is thus for example a relatively straightforward matter to determine the outline of official beliefs in Soviet Marxism or Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Second, an ideology or religion may not cover the whole range of people's values — for instance Christianity does not directly contain a philosophy of science, and so a religion has to reconcile itself to 'secular' forces arising from the procedures and goals of widely accepted practices and activities. For the sake of clarity I shall call the religious and ideological systems as containing *systematic* values and I shall refer to the secular values as *procedural* values. Sometimes of course there may be some tension or conflict between the two — for example scientific method may conflict with some versions of Marxism. To this sort of point I shall return. Further, systematic values may modify procedural ones. Secular moral values may be interpreted and changed by being seen through a religious grid: thus humility is emphasized strongly by Christians in view of the example of Christ. It would thus figure more centrally than it would otherwise be likely to in a purely secular morality.

In addition to what may be called collective values, whether systematic or procedural, individuals will have their own actual priorities. Thus even if a person is sincerely a Theravadin Buddhist he may in his actual behaviour express preferences not strictly in accord with the official system of values — for instance he may go hunting. I shall call these 'private values'.

Now if we survey the planetary scene in regard to systematic values, we

observe an extraordinary variety. To recapitulate briefly: we can see the major religious systems — Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism — and some vigorous if lesser ones — Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, various new religions of Africa and Japan, Mormonism, Christian Science and so forth. Besides these are various interpretations of Marxism which have acquired official and “establishment” status. Overlapping with many of these systems are other varieties of political outlook, ranging from social democracy to nationalist collectivism. How far can one perceive any possible unity in all this variety?

First, I think it is a hopeless task to formulate a central essence in all the systems, as though they represent so many different approaches to the same truth. This is not to deny that such an interpretation has been attempted. It is a notable part of the neo-Vedāntin position as constructed by such writers as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. However, in practice the synthesis itself becomes a new and separate system, since its proposals fail to meet with acceptance by the systems which it attempts to synthesize. Let me illustrate.

In order to exhibit a single essence of all religions, neo-Vedānta fastens upon mystical or contemplative experience and its related doctrines. Thus in regard to Christianity, the sayings of Christ (“I and the Father are one”) are seen as affirming a non-dual experience of ultimate reality. Now although we cannot rule out something of this in Jesus’ own experience, the fact is that the main stream of Christian orthodoxy has consistently rejected the possibility of identification with God: that is, the individual is always separate in essence from the divine reality. This dualism is echoed and amplified in Islam, incidentally, and the martyrdom of al-Hallaj arose from his non-dualistic interpretation of his experience. In brief, orthodox Christianity and orthodox Islam are at variance with neo-Vedānta. This is not to affirm that one side or the other is superior — that is a further question which we do not have to deal with here.

In addition to neo-Vedānta’s concentration on mysticism is its attempt to extend the synthesis by a doctrine of differing levels of truth — thus even Marxism is fitted into the picture by the claim that it analyzes the material world and is adequate at that level, though it needs supplementa-

tion if proper account is to be taken of the 'higher' spiritual level. However it is clear that this device serves to conceal contradictions between systems. Thus on two counts we must, perhaps with regret, note the failure of the neo-Vedānta synthesis to perform its reconciling task. And one can predict that other such attempts would also end in failure.

But even if a total synthesis is elusive a number of partial ones may be possible, and the plausibility of neo-Vedānta stems from the fact that up to a point it is correct in detecting recurring motifs in the great religions. To this point I shall return shortly. Meanwhile, it may be that there will be some impatience with the emphasis I have so far placed upon religious value-systems. After all, many leading intellectuals and many ordinary men have consciously rejected religious or spiritual values, whether in the name of humanistic atheism or of Marxism, etc. So even if it were possible, à la neo-Vedānta, to construct a religious synthesis it would still not be that total synthesis which could lead to a world value-system. And there is still the further question of the relation of all this to procedural and private values.

The conflicts inherent in the present variety of religions and ideologies are such that we would seem to be driven to seek a common value-agreement at a higher logical level. We may not agree about *content*; but we might agree about how we can explore value-systems in a context, hopefully, of toleration.

In speaking of a higher-level solution to the problem of the pluralism of the world of value-systems I refer to the notion that we might agree on how we establish and recognize values, even if we may not agree about the values themselves. In other words we might agree on higher-order values without agreeing on lower-order ones. This would be akin to the situation in science: we may agree about methods of verification and falsification while disagreeing about actual theories.

Now if we are to realize this higher-order objective, we would need to be reasonably clear about the nature of the competing value-systems. For in that systematic values stem as the name implies from systems, we do not choose our values "neat", but rather they are determined in a complex choice of systematic belief. What then can be said about the logic of

such choice?

First, let us note that the systems are not rigidly deductive — they are not like Euclidean geometry. They bring together a whole pattern of experiences, data, doctrines. For instance, Marxism incorporates what it takes to be insights drawn from history, economic structure, Hegelian dialectics and so forth. The result is systematic, but also like a collage. What is important is that the different parts should hang together in an acceptable and satisfying way. The fact that systems have this relatively "soft" internal structure means that both verification and falsification, so far as they can be achieved, are not holistic. For instance, one could modify the account of the historical dialectic in the light of, for instance, material from Chinese history, without thereby wrecking the whole Marxist system. Or again one could reject the story of Adam and Eve without destroying the whole of Christian doctrine. This is one reason why knockdown disproofs of belief-systems are not possible. It follows on Popperian grounds that they cannot be regarded as scientific.

And indeed why should they be? After all, belief-systems such as we have been concerned with are there to relate people to the cosmos and to their past and future, and so have an inescapable existential and practical character. They have in a sense an inspirational character. They are also in a sense mythic — reflecting human concerns but also portraying the realities and rhythms of the outer world. This gives us a second reason for the absence of straight disproofs. Belief-systems fail to retain their grip upon men when for one reason or another they lose their inspirational appeal. Thus philosophers of religion and theologians may help to patch the fabric of Christian doctrine, ravaged a little by the cutting edges of modern knowledge — but such a restoration may not work if central aspects of Christian belief, such as the idea of the saving work of Christ on the cross, no longer seem relevant to the condition of men in modern society, etc. As Flew has said in another context, belief-systems can die the death of a thousand qualifications, or little losses of meaningfulness.

If there are no rigid disproofs, then by the same token there are no proofs. This may seem to be a paradox seeing how much religions and ideologies attract protestations of certitude in their believers. Can the

fundamentalist not point to proofs drawn from the sacred scriptures? But we must remember that fundamentalism is a system within which there may be proofs but *for* which there can be no proofs. It is certain once accepted; but it is not certain to be accepted.

Another reason why proof and disproof of belief-systems are impossible has to do with the role of unifying concepts in them. Such belief-systems in attempting to "place" men in the cosmos and in history have to provide a wide synthesis of experience. They try to cover the whole of life, and unite the meanings of different elements in human experience. This involves that the key-concepts have to have a very wide applicability and consequently a form of systematic ambiguity — consider concepts such as *contradiction* and *alienation* in Marxism, *God* in Christianity, *dukkha* in Buddhism and so forth. Because of this ambiguity in application clearcut disproof of the doctrines embodying these concepts is necessarily lacking.

I have referred to the existential and practical character of the belief-systems, and earlier I referred to choosing between them. Perhaps the latter is an artificial assumption: often men are born into traditions ruled by the belief-systems, so that no very conscious choice need take place. Men can drift into and drift out of commitments and allegiances. But because of the existential and practical aspect of the matter, it is reasonable to model acceptance of a belief-system on a choice. And this introduces us to a further feature of the systems — they attract loyalties, and these are not overturned simply by evidences: more, it is a matter of "moments of truth", or of the gradual erosion of loyalty and acceptability. So once again we meet an unclear-cut situation.

All this means that though belief-systems may struggle against each other both on the plane of truth and on that of practice, the criteria by which we could decide whether one is true or truer than another are soft and hazy. It is idle to pretend that any certain way exists to demonstrate the superiority of one over the rest. This is *not* to deny that there *are* criteria. In the dark not all the cats are grey. But just as in aesthetics one's judgments can be backed by evidences and observations even where one cannot demonstrate value, so too in religion. There are a number of areas

of human thought and experience where we meet this condition of haziness — so there is no special reason to downgrade ideologies and religions because they are necessarily unscientific in this sense.

I have implicitly analyzed a belief-system as having three aspects: claims to truth about the world, practical demands and existential impact. They are wedded together — so that the whole question of disproof (largely to do with the first of the three aspects) is relevant to all three. I shall consider what our analysis so far might suggest concerning “higher-order” values.

First, as to truth—what we may call the metaphysical aspect: if what has been said about criteria and disproof is correct, then the proper attitude to adopt towards belief-systems one does not believe would be one of open-mindedness. Dogmatism would be foolish. This does not mean that one should not be firmly loyal to one's own tradition or position. Being loyal and being dogmatic are two different things. But suppose one of the systems entails some demand for thought control — or in effect a form of dogmatism? We must later look at the problems of any clash between higher-order values and the lower-order systems themselves. Because open-mindedness keeps ultimate options open, it means that we should also be concerned with *understanding alternatives* (this seems to me the main issue of correct religious and political education). In brief, then, the higher-order values generated from an analysis of the metaphysical aspect of belief-systems are: open-mindedness and the desire for understanding. (Understanding does not of course entail agreement, but only opens up the possibility thereof).

The conclusion here is consonant with an important feature of what I earlier referred to as procedural values. One major activity of humanity is scientific enquiry. Here too open-mindedness is vital (even if the whole problem of criteria is rather different in this context). The closed society ultimately is incompatible with scientific exploration and creativity.

Second, regarding the practical aspect — here we may meet a rather more critical situation. For it may well be felt and argued that *practical* contradictions can have a moral significance where openmindedness would be inappropriate. After all, if gassing Jews is a practical conse-

quence of a belief system it is not enough to claim a certain equivocal detachment and open-mindedness. It is not enough to say "I am loyal to my own set of beliefs and to the duty to love one's neighbour — but of course these Nazis have a different set of values which one needs to understand". Here we tread upon the edges of the whole problem of the objectivity of morals — for if moral values can thus be established they are necessarily universal (so that Nazism would be so to speak disproved in so far as it recommended the gassing of Jews). It would be obviously not possible to argue the whole question here; but suffice it to say that there is a large area of morality which can be established "objectively" in that society would be impossible without it. Moreover, there are some values which flow from recognition of the worth of persons — again even collectivist religions and ideologies must have some recognition of personal worth unless they are to fall into contradiction. So there is a way in which morality counts as a set of *procedural* values, with which belief-systems have to be generally compatible. So tolerance arrives as a value to be prized from this direction also (tolerance being the practical outflow of openmindedness and the desire to understand).

Of course, it may be argued that tolerance and openmindedness are not feasible in some contexts. The roots of fundamentalism and firmness of conviction often lie in insecurities; and to some insecurities one must make some sacrifices. Hence the contemporary Chinese does not have the luxury of a pluralism in his education. I would argue that this must be a transitional stage: for ultimately the truth of the pluralism will get out and it is neither a respecter of persons nor of regimes. Indeed the real crisis of traditional religion turns on the incipient relativism seemingly fostered by the recognition of the plurality of men's commitments. (This is not to say that relativism is a genuine consequence of recognition of such plurality — but it is a *seeming* consequence when people are liberated from an unmethodic absolutism).

Third, as to the existential aspect of belief-systems: here one is initially tempted to an emotional relativism: *chacun à son goût*. If there is merit in such a view it merely arises from the fact that men's conditions and temperaments differ — so it can well be that varying belief-systems suit

varying people. But since one cannot separate out the truth aspect from the existential, for they are fused together if the belief-system is to be successful and genuinely inspirational, existential relativism is ruled out: though one should note that a belief-system ought to be sufficiently flexible *internally* so that it can meet different emotional needs, etc. However, are there *procedural* aspects of existential values, to parallel the situation in the pursuit of knowledge and morality? I suppose a 'rational' emotional life is one where one's feelings correspond to their appropriate objects — a realism which it is hard always to maintain. Thus sorrow at a friend's death, joy in a friend's joy and so on are to be cultivated, so far as this is possible. However, there is no doubt that different belief-systems aim at different states: the Buddhist seeks serenity, the Christian joy and so on. But there is no clear way of showing *incompatibilities* here; so that the widely cultivated person would perhaps try to combine different existential moods, too. This is one sphere where eclecticism would be reasonable.

And this may also remind us that because of the difficulty of disproof and because of the relative internal "softness" of belief-systems, oppositions and contradictions between them are not always easy to detect — or at least they do not run holistically through the systems. This means that a certain eclecticism is always possible; and is the basis on which the more constructive forms of dialogue *are* built. Indeed, it would be the sign of a reasonable man that he would add to his stock of insights by examining belief-systems other than his own. So I would add eclecticism as a further value (again higher-order) to be deduced from the pluralistic structure of our world.

Tolerance, openmindedness and eclecticism — these seem to be the values to be promoted, and all compatibly with the objectivity of truth and morals.

If all this follows from the nature and situation of belief-systems in a plural world, these values themselves come to be criteria of the worth and truth of the systems themselves. So though our common values may be higher level they have lower level consequences. Ideologies and religions which cannot adapt to the eirenic realism which the world demands

should be rejected. Peaceful coexistence is a criterion of those with whom we can in good conscience peacefully coexist.

Meanwhile we need to be reminded that private values will actually often go their own separate ways. The best society is where this is easily possible. Let us hope the world can increasingly relax into this divine condition.

Worldview-Pluralism: An Important Paradox and its Possible Solution

There is greater urgency than ever for us in the world today, with every culture and religion present to every other in most cities and cultures of the globe, to work out a theory of pluralism. The most notable advances constitutionally are to be found in the United States constitution and that of India, where separation of religion and the State are laid down. But there are defects even there since they typically do not have a wide enough definition of what they are or should be talking about. For worldviews are not just traditionally religious. There are secular, that is non-religious, ideologies which behave in many ways like religions, and whose enforcement by the State may have as bad effects as the imposition of a single religion on the plural population of a State. Thus until recently Marxism was a kind of official religion in the countries of Eastern Europe. Those who did not conform to the teachings or belong to its 'church' were disadvantaged as citizens, just as in an earlier time those in England who did not affirm the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England were disadvantaged, by being excluded from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. And so it would seem correct that the State should be separated from all worldview-affirming organizations, whether these could be called religions or not. This I believe to be the correct doctrine, and I have argued for it in my *Religion and the Western Mind*.¹

But it leaves untied some loose ends, which if left like that might cause the whole wider doctrine of separation to unravel. The most obvious point is as follows: Does the wider doctrine of separation itself constitute a worldview, or at least a significant element of a worldview? If so, then a State which observes what I believe to be the correct code of separation could be accused of making one worldview, namely that containing, or constituted by, the wider doctrine of separation, mandatory, and thereby offending against its own code. This is troublesome, and there are not wanting people willing to talk about oppressive liberalism and the like.

There are some other problems arising in any system of separation such as the question of whether tolerance of a minority group extends to behavioural diversity. So it may be that the law of the land prohibits kosher slaughter, or polygamous marriage, though these practices may have ancient sanction among the minority group.

But let me address the main issue first. Part of the question turns upon the definition of a worldview, or more narrowly of a religion. You could argue that the rule of tolerance enshrined in a constitution separating worldview and State is procedural rather than substantive. It does not prohibit any particular activity or belief. But it does make rulings about how such beliefs or practices are to be realized. For instance you could teach Islam in a private school but not in a public one (that is, teach it as true: you could of course teach about it in a history lesson or in a broadly conceived religious studies programme).

Still, though in principle the separation of worldview and State is procedural it does in fact restrict demands that a religion may make. Thus, what if a religion regards itself as only really fulfilled if realized in a political form? What if, to be fully content, it has to be institutionalized in public law? Such a claim can be made by many forms of Islam, and maybe could have been made a couple of centuries ago by Calvinism. In this way the procedural code would make some restrictions upon a religion's possible

fulfilment. Does that make the code itself a worldview or a worldview-element, therefore (possibly) having an unfair advantage in a State which incorporates it? Putting it more plainly, is liberalism itself one of the competing worldviews?

Here the path of argument might be held to bifurcate. One path is expressed in the notion that the code does not belong down in the dusty plain of religious or worldview controversy, but is higher-order, loftily skimming above the scene of conflict. As a higher-order position it does not properly compete among the ideologies. That is one path which the argument can take.

The other path is to admit that liberalism has to descend into the dusty plain and fight it out with the camels of Islam, the horses of Christianity, the elephants of Hinduism and the rest. In particular, liberalism has arisen in the West, during the Enlightenment. It is therefore infected with certain values which are typically Western. So it really constitutes either a worldview or a major building block in a worldview which is on a par with alternatives.

Perhaps there is a third path: about that we shall have to see, in due course. Meanwhile in contemplating the two obvious ones, let us think a bit about names. Because it is immediately intelligible I have used the term “liberalism.” But traditionally this word stands for much more than the idea of the freedom of worldviews. It has of course included that: but liberals have often stood for much more besides — in the nineteenth-century West for free trade, and in the twentieth for market forces. But the separation of worldview from State could be applied in theory in a socialist country. So maybe we need a different vocabulary. Let us call it simply “worldview-pluralism.” We may then reframe our question: Is worldview-pluralism itself a worldview or a substantial ingredient in a worldview, or does it live loftily at a different logical level from worldviews?

Before attempting to answer this question, let us break off to analyse the nature of religions and secular worldviews, with the thought of pinpointing those aspects of them which might most

easily bring about conflict and problems in regard to pluralism. Here I follow the seven-dimensional analysis I used in my *The World's Religions*,² built upon a slightly less elaborate account in *The Religious Experience of Mankind*.³ Here I describe religions in terms of seven aspects which are functionalist in general character (in other words I am not analysing religions in relation to some putative common content, however vaguely expressed, such as 'the Transcendent').

First, religions involve practices — the ritual dimension, including worship, meditation and so forth. Sometimes, relevantly to our question a religion's practices may be woven into the State's rites: for instance, the Anglican Coronation Service on the installation of a British monarch, Buddhist ceremonial at State functions in Sri Lanka, and so forth. Obviously, the State will have its own secular rituals, such as parades on National Day and the like. If worldview-pluralism is to be entrenched in a given nation, then the State's rituals have to avoid expressing a particular religious or other worldview. It may also be worth noting at this point that rituals can be mutually offensive. It is a frequent cause of riot and mayhem in India for Muslims and Hindus to indulge in mutually enraging processions.

Second, religions involve feelings and experiences, of awe, of bliss, of being born again and so forth — this is the experiential dimension, often fostered by the ritual or practical dimension, for instance through worship and the solemnity of ceremonial or through the practice of yoga and other methods of meditation. It happens too that the modern nation-State is very apt to create a sense of emotional and sublime patriotism. We need therefore to consider a question which could have been suggested too by the place of ritual in the State: namely, whether nationalism itself is a worldview, or at least a powerful ingredient in a worldview. If so, does this make separation of State and worldview ultimately possible?

Third, religions involve an ethical dimension — they incorporate moral teachings and legal structures (often). Sometimes

there are severe differences in morals and law: for instance Muslim polygamy over against Christian monogamy, and divergences of modes of punishing offences. Generally States like to have a homogeneous law, so that (for instance) Utah could not become a State in the Union unless it renounced polygamy. There can be moral disagreements of a very powerful kind over such issues as abortion which are partly hitched to religious values (these can occur within as well as between religious movements).

Fourth, religions involve a narrative or mythic dimension — the stories which vivify it, such as that of the Buddha's life, the death and resurrection of Christ, the Exodus, the career of the Prophet and so forth, not to mention the rich tales of gods and God. There may be somewhat intransigent differences of story, for instance between Muslims and Christians over whether Jesus really died on the Cross. Such clashes arise particularly where religions depend upon book revelations, often regarded as infallible. When one inerrant scripture contradicts another, there are problems (to put it mildly). In secular ideologies sometimes narrative is a good deal less important: even so traditional Marxism has its dialectical account of history and the revolution, etc. And each State likes to make its school system learn the received history of the country. Differences of interpretation can lead to conflict: differing stories about the Falkland or Malvinas Islands were the basis of the divergent claims of the British and the Argentines.

Fifth, typically religions have a doctrinal dimension — the official or mainstream ideas of God, the Tao, the creation, reincarnation and so forth that lend structure to belief. Sometimes these arise from the narrative dimension: for instance the Biblical account of Jesus and the Spirit raised questions later resolved in Christianity by the Trinity doctrine. Often States, because they make such sacrificial demands upon citizens like to back up their narratives with universalist doctrines to deepen loyalty: so defending Britain becomes defending democracy, fighting for North Vietnam becomes fighting for Marxism, making war for Iran becomes

struggling on behalf of Islam, and so on. This is one motivation for weaving together the values of a worldview with those of the national entity.

Sixth, religions are of course organized and planted in society — this social or organizational dimension itself raises questions about the nature of society. It was typical in Europe after the Reformation for the tag *cuius regio eius religio* to apply: “Of him the rule, of that person the religion.” In other words the citizen of a principality would follow — have to follow the religion of the prince. Established religion became the norm. The Marxist regimes of Eastern Europe became the heirs of this system. Citizens who did not subscribe to the official ideology were disadvantaged. But there could be variants on the system. One was to separate religion and State as in the U.S. Another was the Ottoman *millet* system, whereby Jewish and Christian communities could exist with their own laws, albeit with less privileges than the dominant Muslims.

Seventh, there is the material dimension through which religions express themselves in architecture, sculpture, painting and so on. Since some faiths are in principle aniconic and others heavily into images, this difference can be the source of severe conflict. In addition the State has its own icons, such as war memorials, important in expressing and harnessing grief to patriotism, and these may be problematic whether pluralized or not.

Let us note that the State which practises religion-pluralism is often referred to as the secular State. But this is misleading, since the term ‘secular’ often also means non-religious (or even anti-religious). A pluralistic State may in fact be in a society which is rather non-religious, but it need not be. India is a pluralistic State but lives within the dense ambit of religious practices. The two senses of secular (pluralistic and non-religious) are sometimes confused because the State sometimes makes its icons non-religious to deal with the pluralism of religious beliefs. So war memorials may have angels of victory or some such harmless symbol of the State in order to avoid putting Christian symbols in place which might offend the

families of Jewish soldiers remembered. For the sake of clarity I shall henceforth use 'secular' solely in the sense of 'non-religious' — so we can talk of a secular ideology. But it may be noted that to a great extent the analysis of dimensions applies functionally to secular ideologies such as Marxism, where these are or have been socially entrenched; and substantially it applies too to nationalism as the ideology of the modern State. I shall use 'pluralistic' as a substitute for 'secular' in such locutions as the secular State and the secular university.

In the light of this broad analysis of the dimensions of religion it is easy to see that differing considerations may come to apply to the diverse dimensions. For instance, diversity of belief, in relation to doctrine and narrative, does not raise the same problems as diversity of law or morals. It is often thought that it is necessary to have a homogeneous law or system of morals in order to protect the integrity of a country and to allow it to function well. On the other hand, it is easier to privatize rituals, to allow them to occur behind closed doors. Actually, here it is not so much a matter of privatizing in the strict sense (though that can occur too where individuals go in for private prayers, for instance), but sectionalizing. A given section of the general community can practise its rites behind closed doors. We might call this 'screening off': communities are screened off from one another.

In a way the easiest kind of pluralism to arrange is that of belief. It is possible to arrive at a position of toleration in regard to doctrines and narratives on the ground that these cannot be publicly proved but are matters of faith. Or it may be argued that all religions ultimately point to the same Truth (this in effect is the modern Hindu ideology, pioneered by such figures as Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan, and expressed in his own way by Gandhi). But it may be noted that religious traditions, or movements within them, may react against such toleration, because such a public worldview-pluralism generally goes with a more liberal interpretation of the faith, and this will usually spur a conservative backlash.

Moreover, organizations which live side by side in the same country are liable to make compromises to keep going in peace. Thus Catholicism in the U.S. has consistently emphasized its 'Americanness' and patriotism, since its supranational loyalty might make it enemies especially in a predominantly Protestant State. But compromises of that kind may cause a backlash movement to take a harder line on some other issue, such as abortion and contraception.

Now in terms of the above analysis it is clear that worldview-pluralism taken by itself is not a fully-realized worldview. But its practice will obviously have some fairly strong effects upon the way worldviews are themselves practised. For one thing, by removing the power of the State from the process of enforcing any particular worldview, it will effectively make every religious grouping a voluntary association. This will thus affect the ways the organizational dimension of religions is expressed. This in turn will rebound on educational arrangements. If worldview-pluralism implies the greatest latitude and choice, both public and private schools will exist side by side, but in such an open society it would be very hard to keep private, religious, schools culturally isolated, so that every religion would be open to the influences of secular and general society.

Again it may be necessary for a worldview-pluralist State to ensure that rituals are sectionalized, and screened off from one another. This would mean defining public space which should not contain, at least too prominently, specific religious or other worldview-symbols.

In addition to being a worldview-pluralistic entity the State will be likely to embody some other values — such as the equality of men and women, the need to protect animals, freedom of speech and so on. Such general liberal values may come into conflict with some aspects of religious traditions especially where law enters into these latter. The right of women to have an abortion may conflict with some religious convictions; the property rights of women in Sikhism or Islam might be in question; and so forth. The State will

then be in the position of enforcing modifications in traditional values. I think this situation has to be distinguished from the impact of pure worldview-pluralism upon traditions, because worldview-pluralism here has a liberal extension.

Personally, I am of the opinion that provided the religious traditions are purely voluntary associations (allowing of course for a certain amount of peer and elder pressure inevitable in any association and in any society) the adherence to traditional law should be tolerated. If a woman wishes to veil herself, some in a Western society would think that this was a wrongful submission to chauvinist values. But if a woman wishes to, to express her religious loyalty and to get away from certain elements in the main sexual ethos of a modern society, she should be allowed to. Similarly, people should be able to have communes in which members give up some of their rights, for instance, to personal wages. In an individualist society individuals should be allowed to choose the collective way of life. So as wide a possibility of following traditional law should be implanted. But (it will be said) you would have to draw the line at, for instance, cruelty to animals. What about kosher modes of killing and the like? It appears to me that first research is needed to see if in fact certain modes of killing cause unnecessary suffering, and if they do to explore ways in which traditional law and better informed humaneness can be reconciled (like the use of electric shocks to stun animals, etc.).

Such a society which tries to maximize the desired pluralism has of course to be well-meaning. In practice, human beings are not all that well-meaning: being brought up in certain ways they are suspicious of 'foreign' or different customs. It follows that education in a worldview-pluralistic society must itself be worldview-pluralistic. Young people should be encouraged to learn about others and to appreciate why it is that other people might become very attached to their own diverse customs. This is where certain kinds of education should not be encouraged: what might be described as ghettoized private or religious schools. If there is a Hasidic Jewish school it

should be encouraged in a worldview-pluralistic society teach fairly about other religious traditions. Generally, the comparative study of religions and worldviews, conducted with empathy and fairness, ought to be an adjunct to religious instruction in the school's tradition. The same applies to public schools.

Now I have said enough already to make it clear that though we can envisage a worldview-pluralistic system which maximizes pluralist possibilities through the range of the dimensions of religions, it would also impose some modifications and limitations upon religious and other traditions. From this point of view worldview-pluralism is not, to get back to our fork in the road, loftily above worldviews, but is down there in the dusty plain, interfering with them. But there is a sense or two in which it is above, to which I shall later return. In the meantime, let us concede that it is up to a point a rival to worldviews.

This point will remain valid despite another one worth making here: it is possible for religious and other worldviews, which are sinuous organisms, not utterly fixed in old straightjackets, to incorporate worldview-pluralism into their own fabrics. Thus some religious movements and individuals have been tolerant. Vivekananda's Hindu ideology incorporated a substantial amount of worldview-pluralism into its outlook; so did some in the Anabaptist and Baptist tradition (Roger Williams in Rhode Island for instance); the Quakers; in a more limited way classical Anglicanism; and so on. So if religions already include worldview-pluralism they can live comfortably in a worldview-pluralistic society.

But the fact of rivalry I depicted above remains there. So if worldview-pluralism is a rival worldview, then, in such a night where all cows are black, should we not allow that worldview-pluralism might be held to be false by its rivals? Still, the following argument is in my view highly important.

As a rival, worldview-pluralism is the best sort you could have. Imagine a monistic rival, which would wish the religion to be the only religion of the society or State. Then if that worldview

gained power, rivals would be suppressed or eliminated or at least drastically limited. This indeed is part of the problem in a number of societies. Thus, the government of the Sudan in adopting Muslim law wishes to apply it in the South, where most inhabitants either belong to the Classical African traditions or to Christianity. They feel this as an unjust imposition, not giving them the liberty to practise their traditions fully. Likewise Marxism in Tibet is monistic in severely inhibiting the practice of Buddhism.

Putting matters a bit more formally, one might argue that with worldview-pluralism in control every tradition would get most if not all of what it wants. Let us say each can get 90%. But if a monistic worldview was in charge, it would get 100% of what it wanted, but everyone else would only get 10%. Of course the statistics are imaginary: but the point is plain. Beginning from a position of equality between worldviews, a worldview-pluralistic society would maximize the practice of worldviews. And so, though worldview-pluralism may modify somewhat the practice of religions and ideologies, it is itself a minimalist adversary.

It is an adversary still because it has to do with power. This inhibits those religions which wish to have political as well as spiritual power. In so far as classical Islam wished to set up an ideal society its full implementation is prevented by the coming of worldview-pluralism. Nevertheless, as we have argued worldview-pluralism would give Islam most of what it might want. Could not, within a worldview-pluralist State, there be formed a voluntary *millet* for Muslims in which they could practise most of their traditional law?

Obviously we have left unanswered questions of what political arrangements would be needed in a worldview-pluralist society. It is immediately relevant that majority-rule democracy, such as prevails in many liberal countries, would not do. There are plenty of historical examples of where the majority votes for the suppression of the minority worldview. For instance, in Northern Ireland, where the Catholic minority has been denied full expression

of its rights. As a matter of fact it is urgent for us to explore various alternative political arrangements, since the world will be increasingly faced with problems of minority rights — for instance in many African countries, which have a plethora of subnationalities and irrational ex-colonial boundaries; in the Soviet Union where the reexpression of nationalism will lead to new minority problems (for instance the Russian minority in the Baltic States) and so on. But let us return now to our main argument. We have so far concluded that even if we look upon worldview-pluralism as being a rival to other worldviews it is nevertheless the least menacing of rivals, since it aims to give all subgroups the maximum compossible rights or freedom.

Though we recognize that worldview-pluralism is, because political power is involved, a rival worldview at the level of the dusty plain of worldviews, it can also be seen as existing at a higher level, in the mountains of a higher order. For just considered by itself, without the liberal extensions which usually accompany it, it can be regarded as a formal system designed simply to govern the way in which we maximize pluralism. Moreover, part of its justification is not so much basic, to do with the distribution of rights, as epistemological: since there are no proofs in worldviews except from within themselves, it is not justified to teach any one of them, or enforce any one of them, as certainly the truth.

The point needs dwelling on, because it bears on the problem of fanaticism. The fanatic may be defined as one who acts as if his belief system has public truth. But worldviews do not have this. Thus the Muslim may think that his beliefs are true because deducible from the Qur'ān, and that the Qur'ān is such a wonderful book that it must be the revelation of the divine mind. But though he can have good reasons for saying this they cannot amount to a proof. That the Qur'ān contains wonders, bears good fruits and so on are not proofs, since it could have all these properties without being revelation or being certainly true. The same goes for other sacred books. Scientific humanism cannot be proved either, because in setting

limits to truth (excluding belief in the transcendent and downplaying religious experience) it necessarily gets into the very realm of the transcendent it wishes to exclude and enters the area of metaphysical debate with all its uncertainties. All this does not mean that we cannot have inner conviction or certitude about a worldview, but rather it implies that we do not have public proofs. What is uncertain should not be imposed unquestioningly upon people. It follows that there should be openness in education. Even well-established theories should be taught with a certain degree of scepticism or openness to alternatives, since the history of science is littered with the corpses of over-confident theories.

Intuitively this is recognized by fanatics, because it has been customary to back up dominant religions by force, by heresy-hunting, by the burning of books and the like. It is as if certain ideas are too *dangerous* to the left to wander around: they have to be imprisoned or destroyed. Thus they are seen to be a menace, which they would not be if we were really confident of showing our beliefs to be true by ordinary processes. We do not feel called to lock up flat-earthers.

All this will no doubt remind us that liberal extensions to worldview-pluralism are natural and desirable — freedom of opinion in general is a natural accompaniment of it, because the open society is where truth flourishes better because the questioning of received theories is a major means to the advancement of science, and a stimulus to the humanities. (There are some delicate questions about censorship, since living in a plural society is often a ticklish business, so that we do not wish to encourage the publication of insults to minority groups, for instance. Yet preventing people from publishing material that could outrage someone or other would involve heavy censorship. My opinion is: words by themselves do not maim or injure, and people should feel self-confident enough to stand up to insults, so the burden of outrage should be born by those who are insulted.) An open society should be free, but it should also take seriously the practice of courtesy. The Confucian tradition has

something to teach us here. The cultivation of respectful manners is a fine ingredient of education in the promulgation of worldview-pluralism. But there is a tension here, which we have to recognize, with the cause of openness.

We should note that worldview-pluralism may help to encourage a further plurality. For in an already plural society, as now in most countries, every religious tradition meets every other. It is common for new religious movements to appear within the interstices between meeting traditions. Various kinds of eclecticism will be, moreover, encouraged for individuals. There is also strong empirical evidence for the growth of unattached individuals, especially in advanced industrial societies, who have their own private worldviews. Moreover, the fact that a worldview-pluralistic society is not authoritarian, so that people are free to stay in a tradition or move out — so that all associations become voluntary associations — will mean that people will increasingly pick and choose their worldviews, often adding bits and pieces to them and not swallowing them whole. Even those evangelical and 'conservative' people who seem to swallow positions whole do not do so, because the positions they swallow are themselves already eclectic. Let me give some examples: Increasingly, for instance in Italy and the United States, practising Catholics jettison the Pope's teaching about birth-control and substitute a humanist doctrine here. It is a Catholicism of the Pope and of Marie Stopes-Roe. Again, evangelical supporters of Biblical conservatism are supporting rituals of preaching which are quite modern and innovative, and may incorporate patriotism, which is surely an addition to the basic Christian teachings which they claim to uphold. The net result of all this is that a world-pluralistic society under modern conditions is growingly plural. Worldviews multiply and transform themselves.

But it may be argued that they must be held somehow within a single framework if society is to be stable. It is true that in the modern nation State there will tend to be a common set of dimensions, including a roughly agreed history and ideals of good

citizenship. For one thing, societies of differing traditions can live together within a common economic framework. Now it may be that this fact alone is beginning to confer a certain homogeneity upon the world. Hilton Hotels multiply; credit cards become valid everywhere; we standardize communications systems; we are beginning to acquire a world language; supermarkets look a lot alike; measurement systems converge. All this is true. But it does not follow from this that we need to homogenize moralities or customs. Still less do we need to homogenize beliefs. In fact it may be argued that it is desirable for us to take thought about encouraging diversity, at a time when there are world forces which may, if unchecked, cause a drift towards a rather dreary uniformity — where every Indian village is rapt with attention to *Dallas*.

In brief, then, I would argue for worldview-pluralism as a framework for the peaceful living together in societies of diverse religions and ideologies. Within as wide an ambit as possible differing rituals, morals, beliefs and experiences should be tolerated. But we have already noted that the task of mutual toleration would be made much easier if worldview-pluralism itself comes to characterize worldviews and is not just externally applied by States. In other words, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and other traditions and their subtraditions might weave into their own fabric the stance of worldview-pluralism. We will take this topic in two parts. First, let us consider what sort of theory this might involve from within the religion. After all, there are periods when, for instance, Protestants thought of the Roman Catholic Church as representing Antichrist. Obviously worldview-toleration could hardly coexist with such an attitude. So we shall first sketch an outlook which gives worldview-pluralism a kind of spiritual role to play. Second, we shall consider what has to be done about worldviews which flagrantly oppose worldview-pluralism. What attitude would we take to revolutionary Marxism in the present (1990) Chinese style or to Nazism?

On the first issue, we could note first of all that worldview-pluralism would provide a critical framework for the evaluation of

one's own tradition. It would provide an ambience for the open discussion of values. Now some people might be perfectly satisfied with their tradition and feel no need for critical self-evaluation. But on the other hand, two salient facts might be felt to be persuasive. First, because humans are often confused and selfish they can easily distort their ultimate values, using religion or ideology for base or ignorant purposes. A critical ambience would help us to purify our traditions in so far as we can see beyond our own confusion and selfishness. The existence of other traditions helps to keep us honest. So traditions could be viewed as mutually friendly critics. Second, everyone has to recognize that in a very changing world traditions and ideologies need to adapt, in order just to stay true to themselves. What is a Christian to make of new technologies of genetic interference in human development? What is a Buddhist to make of new theories of psychotherapy? What is a Jew to make of new political changes in Israel? All such questions need discussion, for the answers to them are not at all obvious. This is another case where the open atmosphere of worldview-pluralism would be helpful.

There may be deeper theories available. For instance, from a Christian standpoint one might wish to hold that the Holy Spirit works in all of human history and through the world religions themselves. We might look towards a theory of the complementarity of religious traditions, for instance of Buddhism and Christianity with their very different basic assumptions but their convergences in ethics and piety. Obviously there is plenty of demand for a 'theology of worldview-pluralism' (or a 'buddhology of worldview-pluralism'). I would think that the requirement to take worldview-pluralism seriously would stimulate some fairly radical rethinkings of merely traditionalist attitudes. One could expect worries about this, of course, and some degree of backlash.

This brings us to the second topic outlined above which we have to deal with. What do we do about systems of belief and organization which simply reject worldview-pluralism, and aim to impose beliefs and values which suppress alternatives on societies?

Could one not sincerely hold that only if a whole society is committed to a certain worldview could certain values be realized — for instance national rehabilitation and self-expression (as in the Nazi case), or revolutionary transformation of peoples's lives towards a juster and healthier social order (as in the case of Communism) or the creation of a loving Christian order? We get back here of course into the debates of the dusty plain, between worldviews, including the notion that in the long run worldview-pluralism will help to create the best results.

I shall just hint at some of the ways such a debate might be conducted, before turning to the problem of tolerating (or not) the intolerant. Recent history in Eastern Europe has shown the incredible inefficiencies and injustice arising from monistic systems. Without openness stupidities go uncorrected. We should not underestimate the human capacity for error and confusion. This incidentally is an insight that the Christian, for example, can derive from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions — Christianity has often emphasized original sin so much in terms of wrong action that it has neglected original ignorance — the clouding of vision which also characterizes human beings' responses. The Buddhist ascription of our troubles to the threefold operation of greed, hatred and delusion is well worth pondering. Anyway, monistic systems turn out to be highly inefficient, except perhaps in the conduct of warfare, where Nazism, Stalinism and Maoism showed great success, as also Vietnamese Marxism.

It might be worth underlining a point here which follows the thought of Popper (among others). That is, epistemology goes hand in hand with worldview-pluralism. For the advance of knowledge is often, as we noted earlier, through the overthrow or modification of existing theories, and sometimes through the adoption of ideas at first treated with scorn even by sophisticated persons, such as the theory of tectonic plates and continental drift, at first considered to be, as Americans say, flaky. Consequently, worldview-pluralism is a condition of the healthy advance of science and the

creativity of the arts, etc. This epistemological solidarity between toleration and the pursuit of truth (and the elimination of the false) is worth taking seriously. It is a contributory factor to the inefficiency of monistic societies. But it also has a deeper meaning, and that is that knowledge itself presupposes openness. In other words worldview-pluralism is an ineluctable ingredient in our methodology.

Still, the question remains as to how we are to deal with monistic systems. Does the struggle against them not impose severe restrictions upon the limits of worldview-pluralism?

There is no doubt that where force is liable to be used we have to prepare to use counterforce. The defence of worldview-pluralism must occasion if necessary the deployment of some degree of violence. This does not mean that we should not in ordinary circumstances tolerate Nazis and Marxists and fanatical Christians. The feelings which animate their rages and ambitions are not necessarily bad ones. The love of the nation, though ultimately limited, has its nobilities and joys. The love of economic and social justice is good. The love of Love, even if fanatically expressed, is not itself evil. If we can gradually educate nationalists to be more self-confident, revolutionaries to be less arrogant and Christians to exercise humility, then these groups will fade and moderate. It is for the worldview-pluralist to dominate the field by persuasion and example. But if revolutionaries or fanatics begin to get in the ascendant then clearly precautions have to be taken. But even in these circumstances all could be lost if in combatting the brutal and the arrogant you catch these diseases. If the pluralist herself becomes brutal and arrogant, then the path of pluralism gets to be overgrown by those very monistic thorns which we might seek to combat. Hence worldview-pluralism needs to heed a maxim: Violence is to be minimized, both in attitude and actuality. This is not to eschew violence, but to keep it in severe check. This is a lesson, by the way, sometimes lost upon the police of all countries. Their job should be reducing violence but, being human, both easily cruel and afraid, they often use far too much, enjoying it.

All this also has lessons in relation to ethics, and the question of whether homogeneity of mores is not too strongly stressed. It seems that the essentials of ethics are encompassed by the very attitudes which stem from worldview-pluralism. For behind this attitude lie various virtues. First, there is the need to respect other human beings, whatever their beliefs. This respect involves of course the resolve not to kill others; and respect must include some economic freedom for others — the respect therefore for property. Second, in respecting other viewpoints we need to understand them, and this involves among other things, empathy for others, so that we can as it were 'stand in their shoes'. There is already a great deal contained in exercising respect and empathy. We already have the beginnings of an adequate morality. But we can within these bounds differ about a lot of things — sexual mores, abortion, varieties of welfare and charity, animal rights and so forth.

In this discussion I have assumed, realistically in regard to the present world, the division of societies into nation-States. Admittedly some areas are scarcely nations, but almost inevitably everywhere the process of nation-building is going on. It is for instance fairly successful in Singapore, before a somewhat miscellaneous congeries of peoples, predominantly Chinese, and now more clearly self-conscious as a defined nation. Now in thinking of societies as nations we need to reflect about the role of nationalism in relation to worldview-pluralism. For nationalism is like a religion: it has its rituals of the State; its material dimension in its tourist places and war memorials, etc.; its ethics in educating the 'good citizen'; its mythology in its national history; its organization in the State; its patriotic emotions and experiences of exaltation. Yet at the same time minorities are likely to have been multiplying — Turks in Germany, Algerians in France, Pakistanis in Britain, Italians in Switzerland, and so on. Only such major immigrant nations as the United States and Australia can operate on the principle of the melting-pot: the U.S. more particularly because it defines America through the ideology of the constitution. But the

British person is not defined by a constitution, nor the German, but by the accident of birth, for the most part. Nevertheless, worldview-pluralism demands something in the doctrinal dimension of nationalism, and something too in the mythic dimension. It demands that the theory and history of the nation should be expressed in such a way that worldview-pluralism is celebrated as a value of national life. In short, part of the glory of Britain is its tender regard for minorities, for its freedom of religion, etc. Obviously that freedom took a long time in coming, so there is no need to whitewash the past, but rather a desideratum to emphasize the successful struggle to overcome disadvantages for Jews, Catholics and other minority groups. In brief, just as worldview-pluralism may be, as we explained earlier, absorbed into and made part of a traditional religious (or ideological) worldview, so it can be absorbed into and blended with the religion of British or Canadian or whatever nationalism.

And yet we cannot blind ourselves to the eventual irrelevance of nationalism, at least in a full-blooded way. As the world knits itself into a tighter ball of communications and economic transactions, transnational operations will increasingly dominate economics. Transnational forces, such as religious traditions, are likely to be more effective. Tourism and work-travel will mingle populations. Climatic and general environmental problems will demand international solutions. Nation-States, especially the smaller ones, will more and more come to function like trade unions, trying to protect the earnings and rights of their citizens. Human awareness will lead people to see that the community of ultimate concern is the human race, or maybe more broadly all living beings. Nations will in such circumstances lose some of their overwhelming lien on their citizens, demanding ultimate sacrifices. But they will remain convenient foci of identity. In these conditions, nationalism will or ought to be moderated: expressed in world soccer competitions and the like, and subject to the telling of friendly ethnic jokes. Nations will group in larger entities, as in Europe. It is important that these larger entities build into their framework due regard for human

rights; and with it, worldview-pluralism. It may in fact be easier for such wider entities to adopt such pluralism.

All this points to an increase in federal or confederal arrangements. It is, as I pointed out earlier in this article, important to work out new political arrangements which would make minorities more secure than the usual majority-rule allows. If parties divide, as they often do, on ethnic or religious lines, there is possible trouble. It is fear of this that has provided the general practices of one-party rule in African States: but of course one-party rule tends to dictatorship, and dictatorship is unfriendly to worldview-pluralism: the cure becomes worse than the disease. It may be that cantonal systems are worth trying out. There is a case for revamping the *millet* system, with perhaps an extra *millet* for those who do not wish to be in any *millet*. The caste system, if equalized — its chief fault being its hierarchical arrangement — is worth studying. But I do not propose here to resolve the difficult problems of confederation: I only wish to point out that in living societies worldview-pluralism may drive us more in the direction of new political systems.

My general conclusion, then, is that worldview-pluralism is a most desirable policy and is destined ultimately to become the form under which enlightened societies prescribe the toleration of diverse belief and practice systems. Unfortunately, even in fairly democratic countries there are still many imperfections in this regard. While India and the United States have probably gone further than any other major countries in attempting to follow it, there are backlashes there too: Christian fundamentalists and Hindu revanchists wish to identify religion and patriotism. Britain, as usual, is extremely muddled in its arrangements. But Jews and Muslims are not greatly encouraged by the establishment of Anglicanism (nor are the Welsh and Irish or even the Scots with their own establishment). France has a rather militantly secularist position in education, rather than a pluralistic tradition. Likewise Turkey has been caught in a pun on the two meanings of the word 'secular'. Saudi Arabia has a Wahhabist ideology, despite the large

number of Christians, Hindus, Shi'a and others who work in that country. And so on. In brief, we have the elements of worldview-pluralism being put in place, but only rather partially in many of the democracies. So there is much progress to be made.

Nor is the situation in education altogether favourable. In secular, that is pluralist, universities in the public sector, there is often suspicion of pluralist treatments of religion and ideology, while often in philosophy departments (particularly in English-speaking countries) a particular ideology is *de rigueur* — a variety of scientific humanism. In a number of countries traditional faiths are favourably entrenched in universities, but in ways that give little if any space to alternatives — for instance in Germany, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and parts of South Africa (though Durban-Westville has a more consciously pluralistic, if fragmented, curriculum). A rather militant Marxism is the norm for Chinese universities. And so the picture in education is not yet very favourable. Still, in the U.S.A. and Canada particularly, the crosscultural study of religion and religions has made striking progress in the thirty years from 1960 onwards.

It is of course obvious that prejudices about other religious traditions are fostered by the ghettoization of religious instruction, and that they are moderated by creating greater knowledge. So an important adjunct of any drive towards worldview-pluralism in the crosscultural study of religions, or, more broadly, of worldviews.

To conclude: worldview-pluralism is an ideal which is highly relevant to the mingled populations of most countries. All worldviews would through it get a reasonable deal and be able to achieve a large part, or all, of their aims and values. It does impose some restrictions, especially upon fanatical positions. It reflects, however, the epistemological situation both in regard to the unprobability of worldviews and in regard to the fruitfulness of the open society. It might imply the use of force to restrain forms of extremism, but should be held in consonance with the doctrine of the minimization of violence. It is an important idea in the modern

world, both because of the incidence of ethnically and religiously mixed populations, and because of the undesirability of the imposition of homogeneity. While from one perspective it is a higher-order doctrine about procedures, it also perforce has to come down from the mountains to struggle in the dusty plain where the ideologies and religions dwell. It is desirable that it be absorbed as an element in worldviews by existing traditions, so that they absorb the lesson of toleration and evolve theologies or Buddhologies of a plural religious history. Education can play an important role in preparing for wider attitudes of pluralism.

Notes

1. *Religion and the Western Mind* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1965).
2. *The World's Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
3. *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, reissued in its 4th edition as *The Religious Experience* (New York: Macmillan-Scribners, 1991).



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VI

CONCLUSION



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An Ultimate Vision

I AM A Scottish Episcopalian – that is how I was raised and that is more or less how I am. I love a certain kind of Christian vision. But I have been deeply influenced by Buddhism, and also in some degree by the Vedantic vision of Ramanuja, in the South Indian Hindu tradition. I first encountered Buddhism in Sri Lanka, at the age of twenty, when I was in the army. I came to love it and learn from it. That did not stop me being a Christian, though I had a period as a Marxist when I first went up to Oxford. But during my first long vacation I converted to social democracy and an intense liberalism, largely through reading Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. To put my vision briefly:

I see the heart of the Christian faith as lying in the Trinity: with the Father suffering through the Son, and vivifying the living world through the Spirit. Above all, the Creator knows that freedom involves suffering and She suffers with the cosmos.

I see the heart of Buddhism as diagnosing our troubles in the world as arising through greed, hatred and delusion (so much more realistic than the mythology of the Fall).

I see the heart of Hinduism as seeing the cosmos as God's body.

I see the heart of liberalism as knowing that we may be mistaken, and so being tolerant.

I see the heart of life as creative love.

Above all our ultimate vision has to focus on our planet as a whole: our ultimate concern must focus on humanity (and beyond that living beings) as a whole.

There are some obvious fallacies in popular religion, and I deplore them, though I can understand why weak humans can sincerely hold to them.

One fallacy is to suppose that our vision – our faith – has the whole truth. This is ridiculous; to suppose perhaps that we have more of truth and ethical insight than others might be excusable, but to suppose that we alone have the truth is crazy. How can we know this in advance of knowledge of other world-views? Unfortunately Christianity, like other religions, often supposes that its scriptures are wholly true. This is enough to alienate sensitive people. A major problem with all religions is the claim to authority, whether this be held to reside in the Church or in a Bible. The trouble is that people confuse certitude with objective certainty. I can have certitude that my faith is right, but that in no way warrants my claim

that it has objective truth, to be forced in effect upon others. Let me spell this out with an example.

Suppose a Muslim says that the Qur'an is the mind and the revelation of God. Well, that is a common article of Islamic faith. He backs up his claim by appealing to the undoubted poetic genius of the text. How could a relatively uneducated trader such as the Prophet have composed it on his own? The genius indicates its revealed status. This is a reasonable argument. But is it a proof? Of course it is not a *proof*. One can suppose that genius can arise in unexpected places. There are questions raised by the existence of other and incompatible works of spiritual depth, such as parts of the Buddhist canon, or the Gospels . . . and so forth. So though it is a good argument it does not bring certainty.

Moreover, there are obvious places where the Bible is – taken literally at least – wrong. There are questionable historical claims made about Jesus. Did he really turn water into wine in Cana in Galilee? It is a lovely and instructive story. But true? Why should one have to sacrifice common sense to be a Christian? Now these points that I have been making, about lack of certainty and the fallibility of scripture, may sound negative, but they have a positive side to them. They should allow us to be open-minded about other faiths. They make way for liberal knowledge. It is one of the glories, in my view, about modern Protestantism that it has pioneered liberal Christian faith. It has shown how faith can be self-critical. It has shown too how faith can be in harmony with modern advances in scientific and humanistic understanding. Such modernism is an important ingredient in daily living. It paves the way for toleration. Maybe some people think that too tolerant a faith is wishy-washy. But to me it is part of the open vision that we need in our global civilization. We have lots of intolerance, and we have had burnings, condemnations, narrowness enough in the past.

If we take up a liberal faith, drawing on the rich resources of our tradition or traditions, we must also allow a *nostra culpa*. Our present vision surely differs from our past. I am an Anglican, as I have said, but I do not believe the 39 Articles, and imposing them as a test of faith now seems absurd. It is true that Anglicanism managed within itself to breed a certain degree of toleration, more than most denominations. It manages to embrace both Catholic and Protestant principles, and keep good relations with the Orthodox. It is thus strangely universalistic. For these reasons I like the tradition and admire it. But it had aspects of intolerance as exhibited in its Establishmentarianism, and I believe in separation of church (and mosque and sangha) and state. Catholicism has its culpabilities too, of course: its long resistance to modernism, its invention of cardinals, its absurd infallibilities, its mindless anti-contraceptive stance, and so on. Well, to be true to my own principles I have to admit that the Church might be right on such issues after all, though I vigorously doubt it. Orthodoxy is culpable of a great deal of mindlessness, in harking back to the Fathers and paying little attention to modern intellectual issues. Yet all branches of Christianity have their glories, and more generally all

faiths too have their riches. I am sure the Spirit works creatively throughout human achievements.

It is interesting that my life has so much been bound up with religion, and I want to say a bit about it here because it shows something of my real commitments. First of all I was brought up as an Episcopalian in Scotland, though I had a paternal uncle who was a Church of Scotland minister. I think this pluralistic environment was healthy. But at the end of the war I went into the army and was fairly soon projected into quite a different environment. For a year and half I participated in a course in intelligence in Chinese at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. This was a far cry from the ideological milieu of my school in Scotland. I began to see something of the riches of Confucius. Later, in going to Sri Lanka as a young officer, I saw some of the riches of Buddhism (and to a lesser degree Hinduism). When later, after my undergraduate classics and philosophy at Oxford, I went on to do graduate work, I was determined to do something about the dreadful colonialist mentality of Western learning in those days. It happened that in due course I came to study Sanskrit and Pali, reinforcing both my interest in and engagement with religions and my pluralistic mentality.

So it came to be that my major achievement in academic life from an organizational point of view was founding the Department of Religious Studies in Lancaster, which helped to revolutionize religious education at university and school levels. I was attacked in my Church for this, alas. But I am sure that the Church too has benefited from religious studies. There is for me no conflict between faith and openness. I also have spent nearly two decades in America, dividing my time with Lancaster for the most part. America has a lot of dynamism in religious studies. And as people get a deeper understanding of other cultures, so more real exchanges occur. I have long thought that dialogue is a vital ingredient of studies, and complements the exercise of imaginative and informed empathy in entering into other people's experiences.

One of my major books is called *The Religious Experience*. In it I made the numinous and mystical experiences important poles of faith. It seems to me that religion is warm in people's hearts, as they listen to the prompting of the Lord without and the Spirit within. It is obvious that such a polarity is to be found in varying forms in the major traditions of humankind. This is perhaps the ultimate basis of dialogue.

Maybe we are coming to a new period of human history. Interestingly, academic life has been suffused over the last fifty years with ideology, notably Marxism. There are post-Marxist hangovers too, such as deconstructionism. Most of these philosophies are nonsense, and I am sure future generations will be ashamed of our stupid lip-service to dead men's thought. Not only was Marxism a dangerous form of reductionism, eschewing the importance of imagination and empathy in human beliefs and feeling, but it also helped to fuel the most bizarre, cruel and self-destructive period of totalitarianism. It is for me a wonderful

satisfaction to have lived through both the Nazi and the Marxist periods. It still amazes me that there are creative, yet wrong-headed historians and others who remain Marxists. It also is striking that we still have Freudians. Yet Freud's theories have virtually no empirical basis. But perhaps as I have said, we are entering a new age in which a warmer view of religious experience will take over.

Let me now go back to my vision of the Trinity. In proposing this I wish to present it in a way that does not force it on anyone as dogma, but rather indicates it as a picture that is open to those who love the Christian tradition. It is meant as a picture in the gallery of faiths. What the human race will eventually conclude about the truth is of course open to question. Perhaps we shall always be somewhat divided, and able to hold differing portraits of the ultimate side by side. For me, the numinous experience of reality seems to echo a Spirit, so to speak, behind the world. This is the divine Being shining through what we see around us. Yet in trying to understand the Divine, perhaps the chief obstacle lies in the terrors and sufferings of living creatures in this world. If God is all round us, shaping our world, how can She be so cruel? Can the Father and Mother of us all be so carefree that He does not worry about the very act of creation? Does it not inevitably forebode pain and despair as well as joy and hope? The very fabric of the cosmos contains both life and suffering. Well, for me, the Christian faith contains a vitally important message. It is this: God, in creating, foresees His own suffering. This is because She willingly enters Her own world, according to the Christian message. The cross is written, so to speak, at the very heart of the willing creative act. This is what makes the Christian story distinctive.

There is something else too, which links up with the Vedanta of Ramanuja. His picture is of the cosmos as being the very body of God. For him a body is that which is instrumental to the soul. If I wish to lift my hand I just do it. The hand and arm are under my control, or if you like, under the control of the soul. It is true that human bodies are only imperfectly under the soul's command. I can hardly influence the operation of my gall bladder or my kidneys. So human and more generally animal bodies are but partly under psychic control. But according to Ramanuja, God is different. She has complete control over Her body. Thus, the cosmos, as the divine body, is completely controlled by its Lord, or Lady. God is omnipotent over the universe. Now this can give us the picture too of the Divine Being as most intimately feeling the cosmos, as we feel the operations of our bodies. Further, Ramanuja held too that God stands to our souls as the soul does to the body. In other words, God is the soul of souls. She is within me as the Spirit that is the inner controller (in Sanskrit, the *antaryamin*). Now this image depicts God as the soul of souls and as the Spirit within. This means that God in some way shares our joys and sorrows from within. So Christ is not just there on the cross but within the very fabric of suffering life (and joyful life – in the kitten's purr as well as the rat's death). And so if we can imagine God on the brink of His fiat, about to create from nothing this whole vast cosmos, we imagine Him too foreseeing His suffering,

both within the body of the cosmos and on the cross.

It seems to me that the weakest part of the Christian myth is the story of Adam and Eve. In any case the modern theory of evolution relegates it to a fanciful story. The fact is that evolution involves a rise rather than a fall; and suffering is intrinsic to independence and is thus part of the fabric of freedom, even amid the relative freedoms of the snake and the grasshopper. The fact is that the Church, in noting its deep faith in the Incarnation, wished to provide a cosmic explanation for the need for the atonement. It overloaded the story of the Garden with sin. Yet there was always an explanation for the Incarnation in the need for the Creator to take on the suffering that inevitably would follow the benefits of the freedom She confers upon Her creatures. In any case, I think the Buddhist account of suffering is more realistic, for in a way the very incidence of greed, envy and delusion is the negative side of freedom. As creatures we are inevitably self-centred. We have the impulse to gather to ourselves the fuels and protections we need – hence greed. We also have the tendency to hate other individuals, since we can see ourselves in a competitive situation. And we suffer from a kind of ignorance as we begin on our way to acquire knowledge (and so control). The Buddhist trio that diagnoses our troubles is realistic in part because it goes beyond the idea of defective will. It is misguided action – action controlled by ignorance – that causes half our problems.

This also helps to make sense of the liberal ethos of modern religion. Although academic knowledge often suffers from delusion, as the example of Marxism shows, nevertheless the quest for learning is correct. It is not that learning is everything – far from it. In fact you have to purify your consciousness and feeling in order to achieve genuine self-criticism, which is a vital ingredient in the learning process. This is one area where the tasks of mysticism and self-awareness are in a state of solidarity with self-critical liberalism.

One lesson we can learn from Theravada Buddhism is this – that you can have mysticism without God. You can have the purification of consciousness without the experience of union. If there is nothing out there such as a divine Being, how can there be any union? This thought helps to make sense of some of the varieties of religion; you can have God without mysticism, and mysticism without God: mysticism without the numinous and the numinous without mysticism.

Now this polarity helps to explain something vital about our world. The numinous experience gives a feeling of depth to the cosmos. It gives us the sense of mystery that illuminates what we know and perceive; it lends a sense of depth to the cosmos, hinting at the Divine that lies beyond the universe. It tells us that the cosmos depends upon the Creator. It 'explains' our world out there. On the other hand, the mystical purification of consciousness reveals the nature of ourselves and thereby shows us something else about our cosmos. We generally have a tendency to grasp for the basic nature of the universe; yet its highest flower is also indicative

of its true nature. It is as if we should judge the world by its flowers, not just its quarks; by the orchid and the lion, not just by the molecules that make them up; and above all, by the highest consciousness, which we exhibit in ourselves. The mystical quest leads us to the pure and high apprehension of this. The numinous lies at the base of the cosmos; the mystical at the height of its evolution. Religious experience embraces both poles.

Although I embrace the Christian faith, well suffused with Buddhist values, the view that I have just put forward about types of religious experience is bound to give positive meaning to a whole spectrum of religiosity – to Islam's prophetism and Sufism, to Judaism in both its heroic and prophetic moments and to its Hasidism, to Sikh truth and devotionalism, to the Tao and the quest for heaven, to vibrant kinds of African experience, to the ancient accents of Neoplatonism, and so on. And this width of hospitality to religious experiences in turn suggests that we should take seriously the leaders of all religions. This should be part of a wider acceptance of the human race as a whole, with its many ancestors. For in our modern world we tell our stories through history, and while we may be especially fond of British or German or whatever history, depending on our nation, or of Christian or Jewish or Buddhist history, depending on our religion, ultimately our race is the human race and so our ultimate history is human history (and beyond that evolutionary history). In turn that means that we have to celebrate all our worthy ancestors – not just Shakespeare or Cromwell or Brunel or Nelson (if we are British), but all the great people of the past. Let me list a few: Confucius, Mencius, Hsun-tzu, Bodhidharma, Chuang-tzu, Honen, Shinran, Nichiren, Hokusai, Meiji, Chu Hsi, Yi T'oegye, Yi Yulgok, Sankara, Ramanuja, Asoka, Buddhaghosa, the Buddha, Nagarjuna, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Nehru, Timur, Akbar, Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, Rumi, Zarathustra, Muhammad, Cyrus, al-Hallaj, al-Ghazali, Saladin, Mehmet II, Dostoevsky, Pushkin, Catherine the Great, Plotinus, Augustine, Shaka, Nelson Mandela . . . and so forth.

We should honour the great of all nations and cultures. It is a kind of universal ancestor worship, not just a communion of saints, but a communion of great achievers.

In the last two centuries or more we as humans have gravitated into nations. There is little doubt that nationalism has become the greatest focus of loyalty. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of human beings have sacrificed their lives and their health fighting terrible wars on behalf of national causes. And to reinforce our patriotisms we have invented histories and legends and even religious commitments to sustain our heroisms and hatreds. In many cases we in effect turn ourselves into separate ethnic species. It is as if we are justified in shootings and ethnic cleansings and purges and massacres, when we are dealing with others. We have perpetrated racisms, and often scarcely treat one another as human beings. These appalling crimes seem, alas, sometimes quite natural to us. But the message of the great religions is quite different. We should treat each other with

brotherliness and sisterliness, with love and compassion, with universal humanheartedness. It is of course above all the Christian message that we should love one another, and love our enemies as well as our friends.

Now although I present the differing segments of my vision as above, there is a sense in which my vision is not ultimate. On the one hand, my eyes do not reach for ever – the picture they delineate is necessarily imperfect. On the other hand I note that different eyes see differing things. The love that our vision expresses varies. After all, it is part of the liberal message that the differing faiths are not necessarily compatible. Yet that liberalism has in the long run to be in harmony with our belief in the divine reality. We have to see the openness and creativity of our intuitions *sub specie aeternitatis*. This involves us in a certain view of history. It involves more particularly a vision of the Spirit. Creativity in the spiritual life, whether in Chinese belief, or South Asian or African or European, means that the Divine allows of a freedom which creates a degree of complementarity between different traditions. It is as if God allows of the possibilities of divergences because that is the nature of knowledge. Our idea of divine knowledge must correspond to our conception of natural knowledge. If criticism and the variation of ideas are part of the warp and woof of knowledge it must also be part of the nature of revelation itself. Or we could put it in a different way. God allows of differences in order that different traditions keep one another honest. This is of course a somewhat anthropomorphic way of putting it. But it contains within it a truth. It is also a view that reminds us of the fallibility of revelations, which is part of my vision. It is a far cry from the pretensions of omniscience which have plagued so many traditions. If we eschew omniscience in science, how much more should we give it up in the name of faith? All this implies, however, that the truth of religion is much nearer to aesthetics than it is even to science, with all this critical stance and fallibilities.

As we weave between the types of religious experiences and thread our way among the kinds of spiritual adventures, and as we sum up our ethical intuitions, we surely will recognize that in the future we shall arrive at a global agreement (with luck) which will assemble the diverse spiritual aims together. Why should it not work out in the end that global insights may after all converge?

There is a vital feature of the Christian picture that helps us perhaps to understand this creative convergence. The notion I have tried to spell out suggests a collective activity. Knowledge and insight are not so much individual events as the precipitates of a social activity. This is one way we do not want to postulate some divine and finished omniscience. Rather we see the Divine as advancing the universe in an unheralded way. It is a vision which is like that of the artist, built up from paints and lines. It is a creative construction. So we have two sides to the conception. On the one hand it is collective; on the other hand it is constructed. Both sides suggest a kind of working together. Now these aspects of the picture chime in with the vision of the Trinity. It is itself a social collective (at least

according to the delineation found in the book by Steven Konstantine and myself, *A Christian Systematic Theology in a World Context*). Not everyone accepts the model of a social trinity; but we do, somewhat passionately. This is in part because from our perspective it makes much more sense of the ideal of love, which lies both at the heart of the Divine and at the heart therefore of the Christian gospel. It helps to weld together also the structures of both love and knowledge – both lie in collectivities. In turn, this makes sense of the obverse of those Buddhist cankers that infect conscious life. Greed, hatred and delusion are matched by self-control, love and insight, which work together in the divine triad.

There are other features of our worldly vision. In order to see the earth, as controlled by the divine Being, in a realistic way, we need to pick up some of the elements of Teilhard de Chardin's vision. He, of course, saw the working out of the divine plan in evolutionary terms. We need no doubt also to see the human race in its evolutionary history, and beyond that into the future. We have already seen something of the inadequacy of the story of Adam and Eve. More entrancing is the adventure of human beings as they fashioned civilizations. This account of great cultures and the variegated experiments in living which men and women have undertaken chimes in with the exploratory themes of the great faiths, which have both shaped and been shaped by historical cultures. All this suggests a future continuation of the human race's quest. Our vision suggests that spiritual experience is to be taken centrally in our historical quest. The perception of the mystery and the purification of consciousness are clues to the ways in which we might as human beings reform ourselves. At the moment, I suspect that the ethical values of humanity are shallow, when not driven by spiritual progress. We are perhaps too obsessed with technical and scientific education, important as these are, and insufficiently motivated by desire to improve human impulses and dispositions. The importance of gentleness, love and insight are paramount in a world whose violent dangers have become terribly mutilated by technological expertise. See how attractive are the hatreds of nations; see how little we prize ways of love among peoples; see how we prize cleverness; see how little education values goodness. So we need for the human race a reappraisal of a kind of spiritual ethics which can draw upon the virtues and not the violences that religions and ideologies have in the past helped to foster.

One aspect of de Chardin's vision is rapidly coming true – his idea of the noosphere. As the communications revolution develops speed, so we find human minds more closely entangled in one another. We have yet to see some of the spiritual fruits of this half-disembodied closeness.

Let us go back to recapitulate and consolidate some of the aspects of language we may use in articulating our vision. The notion that the Divine is 'beyond' the world is important, but it has to wed with the notion of the cosmos as God's body; in other words, the otherness of God mates with the idea of Her closeness and presence. The faithful person must be very aware of the nearness of

the divine mystery, suffusing the world all about us. Also, the inwardness of God is important, as part of the very fabric of humanity in and through the pure consciousness that lies at the heart of each one of us. We need to notice that God is neither male nor female, or colloquially is both. Anyone who thinks God is either male or female has very primitive views about gender. That is one of the troubles about taking scriptures too seriously. They tend to be very misleading. We may also note that the Divine is not literally in some heaven, but occupies a kind of transcendent hyperspace which lies all around us. And because She lies within us, as the soul of souls, God can enjoy our life and suffer too with it. Because too the Christian vision includes the cross of Christ, we must stress that God does not create us independent creatures without being willing to pay the price of Her creative act. At the same time, because our nature as creatures is free (and animals have their own freedoms too), ultimately our life must involve a kind of creativity. So our moral and intellectual life has to be open, and is thus ultimately driven by liberal principles. So it is that there are no fixed dogmas and no unrevisable affirmations of faith. Our faith has to be open, outward-looking, and so bound up with free seeking of the Spirit. Moreover, our knowledge is always open, ranging from the flourishing of spiritual experiences to the new discoveries of science. In this vision it is possible to fuse together the insights of science, faith, the numinous, the mystical, the incarnational, morality, open politics, artistic creativity . . . We look forward to a great collective human quest, which takes up the themes of differing civilizations. Let them complement one another.

That is my vision such as it is. I hope that my own spiritual life has in some degree been enriched with the insights I have come to see along the way.



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APPENDIX 1

Additional Publications by Ninian Smart

Virtually all of the items listed below have been published, and full details are available in the Ninian Smart Bibliography in Appendix 2: [A] books; [B] papers in edited books; [C] papers in journals or published as pamphlets. (The bibliography is also available on the Ashgate website.) A few, though, are to be found only in typescript in the Ninian Smart Archive located in Lancaster University Library. They are referred to according to their location as listed in the Archive Catalogue, which is available on-line on the website of the Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University. The entries are grouped by section.

I Individual Traditions

The Religious Experience of Mankind (1969, second edition 1976, third edition 1984, fourth edition 1991, fifth edition 1996 – the last two editions under the title *The Religious Experience*)
Background to the Long Search (1977, and as *The Long Search*, 1978)
Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology (1982)
Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs (1983, second edition 1995)
The World's Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations (1989, second edition 1998)
Religions of Asia (1993)
Religions of the West (1994)
Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs (1996)
World Philosophies (1999)
Atlas of the World's Religions (1999)

(i) Buddhism

Learning From Other Faiths: Buddhism (1972) [C]
Problems of the Application of Western Terminology to Theravada Buddhism with Special Reference to the Relationship Between the Buddha and the Gods (1972) [C]
Precept and Theory in Sri Lanka (1973) [D]
Living Liberation: Jivanmukti and Nirvana (1973) [B]
Nirvana and Timelessness (1976) [C]
Action and Suffering in the Theravadin Tradition (1984) [C]
The Buddha (1997) [B]

A Survey of Buddhist Thought (1997) [B]
The Two Faces of Buddhism (Archive F4)
The Contribution of Buddhism to the Philosophy of Religion (Archive F4)
The Genius of Theravada Buddhism (Archive F6)
The Menander Enquiry: A Dialogue Between a Greek King and the Buddhist Monk Nagasena (Archive F6)
[See too Volume 1, Section 4]

(ii) Hinduism

Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy (1964; second edition, 1992)
Prophet of a New Hindu Age: The Life and Times of Acharya Pranavananda (1985)
Sri Aurobindo and History (1961) [C]
Sankara and the West (1969/1970) [B]
The Meaning of Hinduism (1972) [C]
The Making of Early Hinduism (1978) [B]
Classical Hindu Philosophy and Theology (1978) [B]
An Analysis of Hinduism in the Modern World (1986) [B]
Reflections on the Sources of Knowledge in the Indian Tradition (1989) [B]
Swami Vivekananda: Where Are You When We Need You? (1994) [B]
Response to Brian K. Smith: Re-Envisioning Hinduism (1996) [C]
Hinduism (1997) [B]
The Theory of Knowledge and the Indian Point of View (Archive F6)

(iii) Chinese Religions/Worldviews

Mao (1974)
A Reply to Dr. Shen's Reply (1976) [C]
Discontinuities and Continuities Between Mao Zedong Thought and the Traditional Religions of China (1990) [C]

(iv) Christianity

The Phenomenon of Christianity (1979), also as *In Search of Christianity: Discovering the Diverse Vitality of Christian Life* (1979)
The Uniqueness of Christianity (1974) [C]
How to Understand Myth: A Christian Case (1974) [C]
How to Study Christianity (Archive F6)

(vi) Shamanism

The Religions of Small Societies (1994) [C]

II Worldview Analysis: Religions in the Modern World

Beyond Ideology: Religion and the Future of Western Civilization (1981, 1982)

Religion and Politics in the Modern World (1983)

Ethical and Political Dilemmas of Modern India (1993)

Religion and Nationalism: The Urgency of Transnational Spirituality and Toleration (1994)

Nationalism, Identity, and a More Secure World Order (1979) [C]

Religions and Changing Values (1979) [B]

Religion, Myth and Nationalism (1980) [C]

Pacific Ocean and the Future of Religion (1981) [C]

Asian Cultures and the Impact of the West: India and China (1982) [B]

The Future of Religion (1983) [B]

A Theory of Religious and Ideological Change: Illustrated from Modern South Asian and Other Nationalisms (1984) [C]

The Dynamics of Religious and Political Change: Illustrations from South Asia (1984) [C]

Christianity and Nationalism (1984) [C]

The Pacific Mind: A Proposal (1985) [B]

The Future of Religions (1985) [C]

National and Secular Festivals (1986) [B]

Three Forms of Religious Convergence (1987) [B]

Reflections on the Future of Religion (1989) [B]

India, Sri Lanka and Religion (1989) [B]

Church, Party and State (1989) [B]

Old Religions and New Religions: The Lessons of the Colonial Era (1991) [B]

Religions in the Contemporary World (1992) [B]

Religion and Politics (1993) [B]

Sacred Nationalism (1995) [B]

The Responses of Religions to Modernism and Colonialism (1996) [B]

From the Rio Grande to Tierra Del Fuego: The Religious History of Central and South America (1997) [B]

Tradition, Retrospective Perception, Nationalism and Modernism (1998) [B]

Implicit Religion Across Culture (1998) [C]

Religion and Globalization (1999) [C]

The Global Future of Religion (2003) [B]

Worldview Analysis and Alexander Haig (Archive F4)

The Response of World Religions to Modernity (Archive F4)

A Phenomenology of Fundamentalisms (Archive F4)

Religion and Colonialism: The Reshaping of Eastern Cultures to Resist the West (Archive F4)

Religious Studies and the Emerging World Civilization (Archive F6)

III Christian Theology of Religions and Interfaith Dialogue

The Yogi and the Devotee: The Interplay between the Upanishads and Catholic Theology (1968)
Christian Systematic Theology in a World Context (1991)
Buddhism and Christianity: Rivals and Allies (1993)
Lights of the World: Buddha and Christ (1997)
Being and the Bible (1956) [C]
Revelation and Reasons (1958) [C]
Eight Propositions Against the Prevailing Narrowness in Theology (1960) [C]
Theology, Philosophy and the Natural Sciences (1962) [C]
The Christian and Other Religions (1962) [C]
Christ and the Buddha – Rivals? (1962) [C]
Christianity Amid the Great Religions (1965) [C]
Theology and Other Religions (1965) [B]
Towards a Systematic Future for Theology (1966) [C]
What are the Dimensions of Belief in the Resurrection? (1967) [C]
The Anglican Contribution to the Dialogue of Religions, *The Christian Encounter 5, Ten Theses* (1967) [C]
Truth and Religions (1974) [B]
Transcendental Humanism: A Paper about God and Humanity (1982) [B]
Christianity and Nationalism (1984) [C]
A Speculation About the Trinity Doctrine (1990) [B]
Truth, Criteria and Dialogue between Religions (1995) [B]
Global Christian Theology and Education (1996) [B]
The Inner Controller: Learning from Ramanuja (1996) [B]
Measuring the Ideal: Christian Faith and the World's Worldviews (1997) [B]
Learning From One Another: Buddhism and Christianity (2000) [C]
The Distinctiveness of Christianity (Archive F4)

IV Plurality of Religions: Religious Interpretations

W. C. Smith and Complementarity (1992) [C]
The Role of Religion in the Modern World (1999) [B]
Transcendence in a Pluralistic Context (1997) [B]

V Plurality of Religions: Ethico-Political Implications

Religious Vision and Scientific Method (1983) [C]
Buddhism, Christianity, and the Critique of Ideology (1984) [B]
A Religious Worldview for the 21st Century (1988) [B]
Pluralism, Religions, and the Virtues of Uncertainty (1989) [B]

The Truth of Religions and the Coming World Order (1990) [C]
Modern Civilization and World Community (1991) [B]

VI Conclusion

Choosing a Faith (1994, 1995)

A Conversation with Ninian Smart; Another Conversation with Ninian Smart (2004) [B]



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APPENDIX 2

The Ninian Smart Archive and Bibliography*

Abstract:

The late Professor Smart wrote extensively, at many different levels, on a wide variety of topics, with papers and articles appearing in a bewildering variety of publications worldwide. Previous bibliographies of his work have proven to be, to varying degrees, incomplete and inaccurate. An accurate, comprehensive bibliography is much to be desired, and is what is attempted here, along with a summary of the contents of the Ninian Smart Archive.

A significant collection of books and papers of the late Ninian Smart (1927–2001) has very kindly been donated to the Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University by his widow, Libushka, and family. This collection now forms the basis of a Ninian Smart Archive, which is located in the Lancaster University Library. It is envisaged that the archive will prove an invaluable resource for scholars, educators and students engaged upon research on the work of Professor Smart, as well as for any future biographers. It is appropriate that the archive should be lodged in the institution where, in 1967, he founded the first British university department of Religious Studies.

A research grant from the British Academy facilitated the task of an initial sorting and cataloguing of the collection, a venture vigorously promoted initially by then-department member John Sawyer, along with Paul Heelas, Ian Reader and the rest of department. Much appreciated assistance was also received from Elizabeth Arweck, Hugh Baker, Helen Clish, Shelly Combs, Adrian Cunningham, Barbara DeConcini, Deirdre Dunn, Brian Gates, Carey Gifford, Pam Gleason, Ian Harris, Mary Hayward, Richard Hecht, Nicola Kilgallon, Ursula King, Jaroslav Krejčí, Peggy Morgan, and Johanna Stieber.

An important document in the collection is a typed list of Professor Smart's numerous publications up to 1995. Another is a 'CV Book', containing his personal handwritten record of publications from September 1979 to October 2000 – shortly before his unexpected death. It was clear that there was an excellent basis here for a full bibliography. Its production became a major part of the project.

A bibliography had appeared in each of the two *Festschriften* for Smart, but it was soon apparent that as well as being incomplete, they contained inaccuracies – inaccuracies often originating in the typed list found among Smart's papers. An attempt has now been made, drawing on the archival material as well as the usual bibliographical resources, to draw up an accurate, complete and detailed bibliography of the full range of Smart's publications, from the severely academic to the flippantly entertaining – an apt reflection of their author.

* Originally published as John J. Shepherd, 'The Ninian Smart Archive and Bibliography', *Religion* 35, 2005: 167–97. Copyright © 2005 Elsevier. Reproduced with permission from Elsevier.

A detailed *Ninian Smart Archive Catalogue*, covering all the manuscripts, typescripts, etc., has been placed online, located on the websites both of the Department of Religious Studies ('The Legacy of Ninian Smart', in 'News') and also of the Library of Lancaster University. An outline of the contents of the archive appears below, followed by the complete bibliography. Copies of all of the publications listed are available in the archive (or in the university library). The bibliography will also be placed online, with a view to its being updated from time to time. Notification of any inaccuracies or omissions would therefore be welcome and may be directed to the Lancaster departmental assistant, Gillian Taylor (g.taylor@lancaster.ac.uk), or to me (j.shepherd@ucsm.ac.uk).

Two publications which do not, strictly speaking, belong in the bibliography, but in the production of which Smart was closely involved, should also be noted, given the huge influence that he exercised in helping to change the nature of religious education in British schools:

- *Religious Education in Secondary Schools*, Schools Council Working Paper 36 [Schools Council Project on Religious Education in Secondary Schools, under the direction of Ninian Smart at Lancaster University] (Evans/Methuen Educational, London, 1971).
- *Discovering an Approach* [Schools Council Project on Religious Education in Primary Schools, under the direction of Ninian Smart at Lancaster University] (Schools Council and Macmillan Education, London, 1979).

Biographical notices of Smart appeared in *Who's Who* (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1972 onwards), in Jonathan Parker (ed.), *People of Today* (Debrett's Peerage, London, 1990 onwards), in the *International Who's Who* (Europa, London, 1990 onwards), in *Men of Achievement* (International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, 1997), in *Who's Who in Europe* (Bruxelles, Europ-Elite, 1988), in *Who's Who in America* (Marquis, Chicago, IL, 1990 onwards), in *Who's Who in California* (Who's Who Historical Society, San Clemente, CA, 1989 onwards), in *Who's Who in Religion*, 4th edition (Marquis, Chicago, IL, 1991), and in *Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series*, Vol. 56 (Gale Research, Detroit, MI, 1997). Two further entries, by Ursula King, have now appeared in the *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online version only), and in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edition, Vol. 12 (Macmillan Reference USA, New York, 2005): 8442-8445.

Further, two *Festschriften* for Professor Smart appeared:

- Peter Masefield and Don Wiebe (eds), *Aspects of Religion: Essays in Honour of Ninian Smart* (Peter Lang, New York, 1994).
- Christopher Lamb and Dan Cohn-Sherbok (eds), *The Future of Religion: Postmodern Perspectives – Essays in Honour of Ninian Smart* (Middlesex University Press, London, 1999).

Also noteworthy are the 'Tributes to Ninian Smart (1927–2001)', *Religion*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (October, 2001): 315–386. A number of tributes also appeared in *Religious Studies News*, American Academy of Religion, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring, 2001): 13–14.

The first major book on a key aspect of Smart's work has now appeared: Jose Kuruvachira, *Religious Experience – Buddhist, Christian and Hindu: A Critical Study of Ninian Smart's Philosophical Interpretation of the Numinous and the Mystical* (Intercultural Publications, New Delhi, 2004).

Ninian Smart Archive

The archival material is arranged in sections according to its varied nature. It begins with the material listed in the bibliography. All items in the bibliography are to be found in the archive (or the university library).

The sections of the archive are as follows:

- A. Books written or edited by Smart
- B. Books containing chapters or other material by Smart
- C. Academic journal articles and pamphlets by Smart
- D. Reviews by Smart
- E. Contributions to the Press/Occasional publications:
 - 1. articles
 - 2. obituaries
 - 3. letters
 - 4. autobiographical
 - 5. interviews
 - 6. miscellaneous
- F. Typescripts (mostly unpublished):
 - 1. books: One Thousand and One Amazing and Mysterious Facts about the Religions of All the World; a draft of pp. 1–159 of *Dimensions of the Sacred*; Four Theses on Feuerbach: projection theories of religion (the De Carle lectures delivered in the University of Otago in Dunedin, 1971); a novel: Get That Damned Cathedral Out of My Garden
 - 2. script of tape: 'The Religions of Small Societies' [tape read by Ben Kingsley, Religion, Scriptures and Spirituality Series] (Knowledge Products, Carmichael and Carmichael, Nashville, TN, 1994)
 - 3. beginnings of books: The Autobiography of Jesus; The Story of Us; The Big Bang etc.
 - 4. lectures
 - 5. sermons
 - 6. articles (lectures?)

7. short stories (six)
8. short play
9. memoirs (short, mainly of childhood)
10. fragment: 'The roots of a religion are different from its period of formation...'
11. poems (a very large number of)

G. Manuscripts (various, including some of the above)

H. CV Book – a meticulously detailed handwritten record of 'public lectures, publications, etc.' (1979–2000)

I. Notebooks: twenty (including sixty-eight pages of a book on Globalization)

J. Diary-notebooks (thirty-nine, mostly 1976–1998), and Diaries (1969–2000)

K. Miscellaneous correspondence

L. Reviews of publications by Smart (mostly newspaper clippings)

M. Collections of material connected with conferences (e.g. Cyprus, St Petersburg, South Africa)

N. Schedules of academic visits (e.g., India)

O. Programmes and Publicity for public and other lectures by Smart

P. Curriculum Vitae

Q. Honorary awards

R. Obituaries, funeral service tributes, the Lancaster memorial service (including a tape of the service)

S. Videos of Smart teaching (two), and a 'published' tape ('Christianity and other Religions')

T. Miscellaneous – including some material relating to:

- the Schools Council Projects in Lancaster on religious education
- the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education
- the BBC Long Search programmes
- the American Academy of Religion
- the University of California at Santa Barbara

Appendix

A selection of material (articles, book proposals etc.) found on Smart's laptop

Ninian Smart Bibliography

A. Books

1950–59

Reasons and Faiths: An Investigation of Religious Discourse, Christian and Non-Christian (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London; Humanities Press, New York, 1958).

1960–69

A Dialogue of Religions (SCM Press, London, 1960; reprinted Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1981). Reprinted as *World Religions: A Dialogue* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1966). Swedish translation: *Varldsreligionerna I Dialog* (Gummesons, Stockholm, 1967). *Historical Selections in the Philosophy of Religion* (SCM Press, London; Harper and Row, New York, 1962).

Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1964). 2nd edition (E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1992).

Philosophers and Religious Truth (SCM Press, London, 1964). 2nd edition enlarged (SCM Press, London, 1969).

The Teacher and Christian Belief (James Clarke, London, 1966).

Secular Education and the Logic of Religion (Heslington Lectures delivered at the University of York, 1966) (Faber and Faber, London, 1968).

The Yogi and the Devotee: The Interplay between the Upanishads and Catholic Theology (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1968).

The Religious Experience of Mankind (Scribner's, New York, 1969; Collins, London, 1971). 2nd edition enlarged (Scribner's, New York, 1976) (includes new chapter on African religions). 3rd edition (Scribner's, New York, 1984) (includes new chapter on religions of the Americas and the Pacific). 4th edition published as *The Religious Experience* (Macmillan, New York, 1991). 5th edition, *The Religious Experience* (Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1996).

1970–79

The Philosophy of Religion (Random House, New York, 1970). 2nd edition (Sheldon Press, London; Oxford University Press, New York, 1979).

The Concept of Worship (Macmillan, London; St. Martin's Press, New York, 1972).

The Phenomenon of Religion (Macmillan, London, 1973). 2nd edition (Mowbray, London, 1978).

The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions (The Virginia and Richard Stewart Memorial Lectures 1971) (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1973). Paperback (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1978).

Mao (Fontana Collins, London, 1974).

New Movements in Religious Education, co-edited with Donald Horder (Maurice Temple Smith, London, 1975).

The Message of the Buddha, by K. N. Jayatilleke, posthumous publication edited by Smart (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1975).

Background to the Long Search (BBC Publications, London, 1977). Also published as *The Long Search* (Little, Brown, Boston, MA, 1978). Danish translation: *Den lange sogen: Verdens levende religioner* (Lindhardt og Ringhof, Copenhagen, 1978). Reprinted: *The Long Search*, edited with notes by Atsushi Katayama (The Eihosha, Tokyo, 1981) [containing just the three chapters 'Buddhism', 'Christianity', 'Japan'].

The Phenomenon of Christianity (Collins, London, 1979). Also published as *In Search of Christianity: Discovering the Diverse Vitality of Christian Life* (Harper and Row, San Francisco, CA, 1979).

1980–89

Beyond Ideology: Religion and the Future of Western Civilization (Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Edinburgh, 1979–1980) (Collins, London, 1981; Harper and Row, San Francisco, CA, 1982).

Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology, co-edited with Richard Hecht (Macmillan, London; Crossroad, New York, 1982). Paperback (Macmillan, London; Crossroad, New York, 1989).

Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs (Scribner's, New York, 1983). 2nd edition (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1995).

Religion and Politics in the Modern World, co-edited with Peter H. Merkl (New York University Press, New York, 1983). Paperback (New York University Press, New York, 1985).

Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West, co-edited with John P. Clayton, Steven T. Katz and Patrick Sherry, 3 vols (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985).

Prophet of a New Hindu Age: The Life and Times of Acharya Pranavananda, with Swami Purnananda (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1985).

Concept and Empathy: Essays in the Study of Religion, ed. Donald Wiebe, (Macmillan, London; New York University Press, New York, 1986).

Religion and the Western Mind (Drummond Lectures delivered at the University of Stirling, Scotland, March 1985, and other essays) (Macmillan, London; State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 1987).

The World's Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1989). 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1998).

1990–99

Christian Systematic Theology in a World Context, co-authored with Steven Konstantine (Marshall Pickering, London; Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1991).

Buddhism and Christianity: Rivals and Allies (Martin Lectures delivered at Hong Kong University, autumn semester 1989, and as Appendix the Second Louis Cha Lecture, 'The Western Meaning of Eastern Philosophies', also delivered at Hong Kong University, 1989) (Macmillan, London; University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1993).

Ethical and Political Dilemmas of Modern India, co-edited with Shivesh Thakur (Macmillan, London; St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993).

Religions of Asia (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1993).

Religions of the West (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1994).

Religion and Nationalism: The Urgency of Transnational Spirituality and Toleration (Chavara Lectures delivered in Rome, December 1993) (Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies, Rome, 1994).

Choosing a Faith (Bowerdean Press, London, 1994; Marion Boyars, New York, 1995).

East-West Encounters in Philosophy and Religion, co-edited with B. Srinivasa Murthy (Long Beach Publications, Long Beach, CA, 1996; Popular Prakashan, Bombay/Mumbai, 1996).

Smart Verse: The Owl Flies Amid the Woodwind Hooting, poems by Smart, (Fithian Press, Santa Barbara, CA, 1996).

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4. Autobiographical

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5. 'Aberystwyth: Eccentric necessity in the cultural economy of Wales' (11 April 1975): 10.
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JOHN SHEPHERD was Principal Lecturer in Religious Studies and Social Ethics at St Martin's College, Lancaster, from 1980–1997, with particular responsibility for courses on Islam and Comparative Religious Ethics, and as Course Leader for the Social Ethics

programme. He now works part-time. He is the author of *Experience, Inference and God* (Macmillan, 1975), and co-editor of *Contemporary Religions: A World Guide* (Longman, 1992). His translation of Charlotte von Kirschbaum, *The Woman Question*, was published by Eerdmans in 1996. He is the founding archivist of the recently established Ninian Smart Archive at Lancaster University.

Department of Religion and Philosophy, St Martin's College, Lancaster, now the University of Cumbria, LA1 3JD, U.K. E-mail: john.shepherd@cumbria.ac.uk



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